PHILOSOPHY

(PHYSICAL AND ETHICAL)

By WILLIAM MACKINTIRE SALTER
AUTHOR OF "ETHICAL RELIGION"

SECOND EDITION

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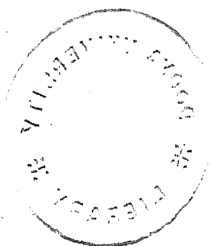
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PREFACE

Philosophy, whatever else it may mean, involves the clarification of our fundamental conceptions. We naturally aspire to a complete view of the world, a theory of the universe. But we have first to clear up our minds as to certain elementary notions. We are using almost every day such terms, for instance, as matter and duty—what do we mean by them? Can the thoughts we chance to have about them stand the test of analysis and criticism? Are they clear and self-consistent? We cannot successfully build a house till we have tested the soundness and strength of our materials. As little can we construct a philosophical system, till we have tested the elementary ideas that are to enter into it and help constitute it. It is idle to try to develop a theistic, monistic, materialistic or any other theory of the universe, till we have searchingly asked ourselves these preliminary questions.

The present book conducts an examination into two fundamental conceptions—viz., Matter and Duty. It is no more than an introduction

to philosophy proper, and a partial introduction at that. Yet the author has tried to do in a thorough-going and scientific way the special work he has attempted, and hopes that his little book may be of service to those who, like himself, are feeling their way to an intelligible and satisfactory view of the world. The book is in any case the result of his own striving, and the tentative, experimental method of treatment that prevails in it perhaps reveals only too plainly that the author did not have his conclusions at the beginning of his investigations, but reached them at the end. Moreover, he does not conceal from his readers and is perfectly willing to confess that he has not as yet a philosophy proper, that a true theory of the universe is as much a problem to him as matter and duty once were. But he hopes, if time and fortune favor, to take further steps than he has already taken—yes, the last steps, and to have and present some day at least the outlines of a consistent philosophical system. Meanwhile, he will be thankful for any criticism of the work already done.

The substance of the first part of the book appeared in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 1884; that of the second part was given at the Plymouth School of Applied Ethics, 1891.

W. M. S.

Philadelphia, May, 1892.

TO THE MEMORY OF

JOHN PARKER JR.,

FROM WHOM AS THE FOUNDER OF

THE PARKER FELLOWSHIPS

IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DISINTERESTED STUDY

ONCE CAME TO ME,

THESE TARDY FIRST-FRUITS OF MY

PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING ARE

IN HONOR AND GRATITUDE

DEDICATED.

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FIRST STEPS IN PHILOSOPHY

PART I. PHYSICAL

CHAPTER I

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MATTER?—AN ANALYSIS

Let us imagine ourselves gathering roses in a garden. The bushes are thorny and in picking one of the roses our fingers are pricked. We have a sensation, which though it be momentary, is distinct and real; we call it pain. The pain we hardly think of attributing to the thorns, though it comes from them; as our sensation we know it can only exist in ourselves. We call it then (if we wish to be exact) a subjective reality.

Suppose now that we bring the roses near our face. We are met with a new sensation and an agreeable one: We smell their perfume. How does the perfume exist? Is it a

something outside of us or is it an experience within? Does it inhere in the rose or in us? Let us attend and question ourselves. I confess that I have done so time and again, and the more I have done so, the surer I am that the perfume is my own feeling or sensation or experience just as truly as the pain is. The pain is given us by an external object, but it does not inhere in the object; and the perfume is caused by the roses, but it does not belong to them. Professor Huxley even says in speaking of the odor of the musk-plant, "that it is as absurd to suppose that muskiness is a quality inherent in one plant as it would be to imagine that pain is a quality inherent in another, because we feel pain when a thorn pricks the finger."* This is a strong language, though it is possible to become so distinctly conscious that odors are our sensations or feelings as to have no hesitancy in subscribing to it.

Modern physiology, however, comes to the support of such a view. It not only teaches that the odor does not exist outside of us, but attempts to show how it arises within us. It tells us of our nostrils, and describes the delicate membrane with which they are lined and the infinitesimal nerve-fibres which connect the membrane with the brain. It teaches

* *Science and Culture*, p. 259

that minute particles, being thrown off from the odorous substance, touch this membrane, that vibrations are thereby produced, which by means of the nerve-fibres are communicated to the brain, and that the sensation of smell is ordinarily the result of the action of all these instrumentalities. The odor does not, strictly speaking, belong to our nostrils (or to any part of the olfactory apparatus) any more than to the external object, but first comes to be in our mind. A sensation of odor may even arise without the presence of an external object. If the appropriate changes take place in the nerve-fibres and are communicated to the brain, the odor results as truly as if some external object were the cause of it. In such a case, we should be mistaken not in saying that the odor exists, but only in supposing that it came from without. For the localizing of the odor is an act of the mind; the same is true of localizing pain. The pain, of which I have already spoken, is not in our fingers, but we place it there. So the perfume is not in the rose, or even in our nostrils; we place it here or there according to our own notions.* Of themselves neither odor

*These notions have always a practical import. They indicate the sources from which we may expect the sensations to come to us or by attending to which we may cause the sensations to cease. That the pain is in the finger means that it is the finger we must attend to, if we wish to

nor pain have any position; and indeed it is doubtful if we should have any notion of space at all, if we had only such sensations. But we may assign them their places so many times that the act of localizing becomes at last almost instantaneous and unconscious, i.e. mechanical.

In a similar way we may come to realize that bitter and sweet and all kinds of tastes are sensations, which though given us by external objects are not, strictly speaking, the properties of these objects, but their effects upon ourselves. So of heat and cold; it takes very little effort to realize that these are our own feelings, since we experience them so vividly at times—feelings, which though linked with various objects, are not intrinsic qualities of them. It is true that according to the teaching of physics, heat is a mode of motion; but when this statement is carefully analyzed, we see that it means not that heat *is* motion, but that when motion is communicated to our organism it becomes heat —heat being, strictly speaking, unmeaning save for a sentient being.

stop the pain. Helmholtz says: "I hold that to speak of our ideas of things as having any other than a practical validity is absolutely meaningless. They can be nothing but symbols, natural signs, which we learn to use for the regulation of our movements and actions. When we have learned to read these symbols aright, we are able with their aid to direct our actions so that they shall have the desired results; that is, that the expected new sensation shall arise." (*Physiologische Optik*, p. 443).

That sound may similarly be a sensation within us rather than a reality without, is probably harder for most of us to realize. The thunder rolls all the same, we naturally believe, whether we hear it or not. Yet physics teaches us—and most educated persons are trying to accustom themselves to think—that the only external things (in this connection) are the air and its vibrations, and that these when coming into contact with the ear, produce sound, but are themselves soundless. On occasion of a report of a neighboring cannon, we may be clearly conscious of the vibrations as such (that is, as distinct from the sound); the house in which we are—or, if we are standing in the open air, the ground—may shake with them; and after such an experience it cannot be difficult to distinguish between the vibrations and the sound, and to entertain the idea that the sound is only an effect upon ourselves. A person who is deaf may be aware of the vibrations and yet mentally realize that owing to certain organic defects he cannot experience the effects which would otherwise come to him.

Color seems, doubtless, like a still more inviolable possession of the outer world. Physics, however, treats it as it does sound. The waves of the supposed ethereal medium are, according to its teaching, the real objective coun-

terparts of color, and color itself is a sensation which we transfer to the particular object from which the wave motions are supposed to be reflected. We may, of course, speak of color and light (as we do of sound and heat), as existing outside of us in this or that portion of space; and there is no harm in our doing so, so long as we do not assume that our language is accurate and scientific. But we can only say with scientific accuracy that color and light are our sensations, produced indeed ordinarily (so far as we have a right to speak at present) by a combination of physical and physiological causes, but not themselves inhering in the external world. Physiology tells us of an optical apparatus, similar in the essential manner of its construction to the olfactory apparatus already described. Each mode of sensation is in fact similarly provided for; and color, being the result of the action of the entire apparatus, is no more in the retina or the nerve or the brain than in the object itself. It arises on the completion of these mechanical processes in a manner that physiology confesses to be beyond its power of comprehension. And colors may arise without the action of external objects, if but the appropriate changes take place in the optical apparatus. Some of us may have had the unfortunate experience

known as "seeing stars," and yet this imaginary light (as we term it) was as truly and really light as that of the "actual" stars in heaven. We should have been mistaken only in supposing that the "imaginary" light came from heaven—that is, in localizing the sensation—not in recognizing its existence. The localizing is a matter of the judgment. Even if we say that color and light must exist somewhere (that is, that they necessarily imply the idea of space), their determinate place is not their own property, but is given them by the mind—though of this mental act we may cease to be conscious. Color-blindness, it should be added, does not mean that the color-blind individual sees what does not exist, but simply that in certain circumstances his sensations are not like those of others who make the majority. The practical uses of life lead us to call him mistaken; but if, the essential facts remaining just the same, the majority shifted to his side, the rest of us who now think that we see correctly would have to allow ourselves "mistaken"—*we* should be the color-blind individuals. In itself the light of a switch-lantern is neither green nor red; what it is in itself no one knows, if, indeed, such a question has any meaning; but green or red are names for its effects on individuals, which may differ as individuals differ.



But the notion most difficult of all to realize, or even, perhaps, to seriously entertain, is that hardness and pressure are our sensations rather than qualities of bodies in themselves. Is not the ground hard, we ask, when we stamp upon it, and the dictionary heavy when we try to lift it? Why if solidity was but a sensation of his, could not the forlorn Hamlet have caused his "too, too solid flesh" to melt? But the question is, what is *meant* by hardness, pressure and solidity? Color is not robbed of existence any more than pain, because its manner of existence is found to be subjective; nor can we change color or pain at will, simply because they are sensations. That hardness and pressure and solidity really exist is beyond dispute; but what are we to understand by real existence in this case? The only answer I can make is that they are real experiences, that when we stamp upon the ground we have an unmistakable feeling of hardness and when we lift the dictionary a distinct sensation of weight or pressure. The solidity of Hamlet's flesh meant that he could touch one part of his body with another and experience their mutual resistance.

It is only stating all this with a little more exactness to say that hardness, pressure and solidity are sensations in us produced by objects outside us. In fact, if we did not have such

sensations, it would mean little to say that the objects were hard or heavy or solid. If the ground did not give me distinctly a sensation of hardness when I struck it, it would not only cease to be hard, it would cease to be the ground in any intelligible sense.* Illustrations might be multiplied to show that the hardness and resistance of bodies mean their capacity to produce such sensations in us—and yet I do not doubt that some readers may have to reflect over the matter for some time before they can agree with me. Proof, in the ordinary sense of the word, is perhaps impossible where all turns on a clear understanding of our own experience. The idealist (for this, in a limited sense, is what I suppose I must begin to call myself) can only say, This is my experience, and if I cannot lead you by your own reflection to a similar understanding of your own, I

* It may be asked, When a ball falls upon the ground, does it not experience the hardness of the latter, and so may not hardness exist independently of ourselves? I answer, Yes, certainly, if we suppose the ball is a sentient thing. But if we are not justified in attributing sentiency to the ball, then to speak of it as experiencing the hardness of the ground is a bit of anthropomorphism. All we can say with scientific accuracy, is that *we* should experience resistance, if we were in the ball's place. Our actual knowledge does not go beyond the fact that the downward motion of the ball ceases (or, if we wish to go into details, that its mass-motion is converted, in part, into a motion of its molecules, which again is convertible into heat).

will at least spare you "arguments and proofs" which can be to little purpose.

One further illustration I may, however, make use of. What do we mean by distinguishing between a ghost (or phantom) and a real body? A phantom may sometimes have a distinct shape and features, and even, as in the case of Protesiláus in Wordsworth's noble poem, *Laodamia*, "roseate lips." And how do we know it to be a phantom—as how did Laodamia know her hero to be after all but a vain shadow—save by essaying to clasp it and finding that it eludes our grasp, that instead of real and unmistakable sensations of resistance it gives us none at all.*

Hence the poet calls Protesiláus an "unsubstantial† form." A thing that resists us is *ip-*

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*"Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to clasp:
Again that consummation she essayed;
But unsubstantial form eludes her grasp
As often as that eager grasp was made.
The Phantom parts—but parts to reunite
And re-assume his place before her sight."

Of a similar tenor is the account of the interview between Ulysses and his mother's shade in the *Odyssey*: "So spake she and I mused in my heart and would fain have embraced the spirit of my mother dead. Thrice I sprang toward her; *thrice she flitted from my hands as a shadow or even as a dream*, and grief waxed ever sharper at my heart." (Butcher and Lang's Translation, xi, 205, ff.)

†Substance has this primary sensible meaning, namely, that an object is not a mere empty form or shadow, but one that resists us when we take hold of it or attempt to pass through it. Philosophers who make an ambitious use of

so facto real.* Even things that we cannot see, or smell or taste or have any sensible experience of whatever, save of this single kind, namely, that they can resist us, we know thereby to exist—for example, the air. Yet what is resistance but a sensation? If so, the bottom element in our notion of reality itself (so far as material things are concerned) is a sensible experience rather than something external to us and separable from us.†

the term would do well to recall now and then its original significance. From what is demonstrable it has come, as often used, to signify just what is indemonstrable. Herbert Spencer well remarks that "we cannot think of substance save in terms that imply material properties." (*Principles of Psychology*, § 63). Contrast John Henry Newman, who endeavors to rehabilitate the Catholic doctrine of transsubstantiation by saying that the change in the consecrated elements is not with the phenomena, which remain the same, but with "what no one on earth knows anything about, the material substances themselves." (*Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Part vii.)

*This was evidently the test which Macbeth had in mind, when he asked,

"Art thou not, fatal vision, *sensible*
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?"
(Act II, Sc. 1.)

†Compare the language of Spencer: " . . . all our experiences of things are ultimately resolvable into either resistances or the signs of resistances." (*Psychology*, § 348.) Again, "Our conception of matter, reduced to its simplest shape, is that of coexistent positions *that offer resistance;* as contrasted with our conception of space in which the coexistent *positions offer no* resistance." (*First Principles*, § 48—the italics are my own.)

A word should be added here as to the distinction often made between the "primary" and "secondary" qualities of matter. Many have admitted that the latter (such as taste, sound and color) are subjective, while stoutly holding that the former (such as hardness and resistance) reside in the objects themselves. A thorough-going analysis shows, however, that this sort of difference does not exist.*

And yet there is a difference. In the first place, resistance is a universal and unchanging quality of bodies—even the molecules and atoms being supposed to have it, however inappreciably to our present senses; while color and other so-called secondary qualities may change before our very eyes. A body without color may possibly be conceived; but one that gave no resistance, (and that would give none, even if our power of noting resistance were in-

*So Professor William James: "To the naïve consciousness all these attributes [color, taste, smell, as well as hardness and pressure] are equally objective. To the critical, all are equally subjective." (*The Feeling of Effort*, Boston, 1880, p. 29.) Professor Huxley develops a similar view in his chapter on "Descartes' 'Discourse,'" (*Lay Sermons*, p. 320 ff.) and in another chapter on "Bishop Berkeley on the Metaphysics of Sensation." (*Critiques and Addresses*, p. 287, ff.) Spencer says: "Thus we are brought to the conclusion that what we are conscious of as properties of matter *even down to its weight and resistance* are but subjective affections produced by objective agencies that are unknown and unknowable." (*Psychology*, § 86—italics are mine.)

creased *ad infinitum*) would cease to be a body in any intelligible sense of that term. All the same, sensations by being permanently and universally possible do not lose their character as sensations and become separate realities. Again, the sensations of resistance and pressure are of more practical importance for us to note than any other. For if we experience them in too emphatic a manner, we may lose (temporarily or for good) the power of further sensation; while odors, sounds, and colors rarely bring after them so serious a consequence. It is rational then to give a higher rank to resistances than to other kinds of sensation; and the latter acquire serious import chiefly when from past association we are led to suspect that resistances will follow after them--as when, for example, in the mountains we are startled with a rumbling and crackling noise and know that an avalanche may be coming. It would be interesting to inquire how far motives of practical convenience or necessity enter into the formation of distinctions and conceptions in common use; yet the interest would be chiefly psychological, since distinctions and conceptions so arising could hardly be regarded as having final or philosophical validity.

What then is left of the external world as the result of the foregoing analysis? Appar-

ently very little. The common sense of men regards the fragrance of the flower as external in the same sense that its color and substance are; but our ungracious analysis has stripped the flower not only of its fragrance, but of every sensible quality it possesses. What is left, then? Is it the form or shape? Now the form is not indeed a sensation; it is rather the boundary or limit of sensations (such as color or resistance), marked out or discerned by the intellect. But what is a limit, when that which is limited is taken away? If a form changes, when its content changes—for example, in the case of shifting clouds—does it not cease to be when the content ceases to be—as when the clouds vanish and leave a clear sky? Now in the idealist's view, the material of the world does not indeed cease to be, but its manner of existence is found to be subjective. How then can the form be objective? Common sense says that a form which has no content is not a real form, but an idea of the mind. A similar line of remark applies to the changes and motions of bodies. If the objects are themselves resolvable into groups of sensations, their changes and movements must have equally to do with sensible experiences. Separated from the objects of which they are predicable, what

are changes and movements but abstractions of the mind?*

But have we not the molecules and atoms, out of which the sensible world is supposed to be composed, to fall back upon as an objective residuum?† So far as I can learn, however, molecules and atoms are supposed to have the primary qualities of matter, resistance and extension, though destitute of the secondary ones. And even if the conception of the atom as a point without extension is the true one, it is none the less thought of as a centre of force or resistance; and if resistance is subjective there is the same difficulty in conceiving of the point as objective that we have experienced in thinking of an empty form. Indeed, whatever the theory of molecules and atoms, they can hardly be regarded as the source whence the sensible (phenomenal) world proceeds, but rather as the sensible world itself stated in the simplest possible terms.‡ They would be dis-

* Huxley says: "All that we know about motion is that it is a name for certain changes in the relation of our visual, tactile, and muscular sensations." (*Science and Culture*, p. 257.)

† So apparently Democritus thought: "Sweet and bitter, hot, cold, color are by convention; only atoms and void are real." (Quoted in *Sextus Empiricus Adv. Math.*, vii, 135.)

‡ Lange regards the atoms as phenomenal, their only difference from ordinary sensations consisting in the fact that the latter are immediately given to us, while atoms are

covered, if ever they could be, not in answer to efforts to find the real and objective causes of our sensations, but by successively dividing and re-dividing the contents of the sensations themselves, and reaching at last their irreducible elements.

Is there, then, absolutely nothing real and objective left? So far as sensible phenomena are concerned, we must answer, No, absolutely nothing is left; the whole sensible (material) world is but an effect upon ourselves. But because nothing sensible or material is left, it

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something "vermittelte und gedachte." (*Geschichte des Materialismus*, Vol. II, p. 165.) Buchner even calls the modern doctrine of atoms an "Entdeckung der Naturforschung," in contrast with the ancient doctrine which he speaks of as a "willkürlich speculative Vorstellung" (quoted by Lange, II, 181). Sir William Thompson's assertion that molecules are pieces of matter of measurable dimensions with shape, motion and laws of motion, intelligible subjects of scientific investigation, (quoted by J. P. Cooke in *Science for All*, Vol. V, p. 293) brings them clearly within the realm of sensible experience and shows, if true, that they are as much subjective as the color, shape and motion of a cloud are. Huxley regards molecules and atoms rather as a useful hypothesis, "a *means of picturing to ourselves* the order of nature" (*Introductory Science Primer*, §§ 48, 49—the italics are mine) than as objects of experimental study—the hypothesis being one, it need scarcely be added, not as to the causes of the world of our sensations, but as to the elements of which it is composed. Molecules and atoms belong after all (according to any conception of them I have ever seen) to the same order of existence with the more familiar objects of our experience; they are not properly speaking, explanations of sensation, but, as Professor G. von Gizycki says of atoms in giving an account of A. Riehl's *Der Philosophische Kriticismus*, "abstractions derived from the facts of sensation."

would be a hasty inference to say that nothing whatever is left. If we are asked, What?—we answer, All that causes sensations. We have allowed and posited a cause for each species of sensation we have considered, and the only trouble has been that each conception of the cause, provisionally allowed, has turned out, on examination to be itself an effect—that is, a sensation in us. We have, for example, regarded odor and other secondary qualities as coming from an extended body external to ourselves; but on turning our attention to the extended body, we found that the element which makes it a body, viz., its resistance, is as much a sensation as odor is. Apart from the resistance, there is but the empty extension or form, and this can hardly be called a cause, if indeed it can be said to *be*, in any real and objective sense. Our search for causes thus proved unsuccessful. But though we know of no causes, we have an inextinguishable faith that there *are* such causes—there being in fact no particular thing we are more sure of than that for every event (and every sensible phenomenon is an event, viz., in ourselves) there is some kind of explanation or cause. It only remains to us then, in the absence of knowledge, to think, conjecture or speculate—by which I mean to form some kind of hypothesis

which we cannot hope to (in the strict sense of the word) verify. An hypothesis as to the nature and order of sensible phenomena need not remain an hypothesis, since we can experience the phenomena with which it has to do and test the hypothesis by its conformity, or lack of conformity, to the same. But we do not seem to be able to find the causes of these phenomena, and so, though one opinion may look more probable than another and may be even be practically adopted and acted upon, it cannot in the present state of things take the rank of scientific knowledge. To recount the opinions of men on this subject would be to write the history of metaphysics; and to examine them, with the aim of fixing upon some one as an opinion for ourselves, would be venturing on a solution of the metaphysical problem. The theist has one solution and the speculative materialist* another. The agnostic, in the Kan-

*It may be a question whether there ever has been such a materialist. For ordinary materialism does not hold to some supersensible matter and motion as the explanation of things, but to matter and motion as we know them and are in contact with them, though, it may be, reduced to their simplest terms, e. g., molecules and atoms. If the analysis given above is correct, ordinary materialism is simply mental confusion. Huxley, however, suggests a genuine speculative materialism (see his *Hume*, p. 79) whether involving self-contradictions or not, I do not undertake to say. He also suggests an opposite view—viz., that the world as we know it "may have no more resemblance to its cause than one of Bach's fugues has to the person who is playing it." (*Lay Sermons*, p. 329.)

tian and Spencerian sense, is content with acknowledging the problem and asserting it to be beyond human power of solution. But it is no part of our present purpose to discuss these varying views. To do so would be to take the last steps in philosophy rather than the first. I wish in what follows simply to become more at home—and to make my readers more at home—in the position* respecting sensible phenomena which has already been reached.

*This position might be called Sensible or Physical Idealism and is nowise inconsistent with, but rather implies a Supersensible or Metaphysical Realism. And such a union of idealism and realism is the view of Spencer, as it was that of Kant. Absolute Idealism, as I understand it, takes a step further and involves the causes of sensible phenomena in the same subjective relationships (whether in a human or absolute mind) in which we have found sensible phenomena themselves to be involved. This statement of absolute idealism is made, however, under correction.

CHAPTER II

DIFFICULTIES IN REALIZING THE IDEALISTIC VIEW

The first difficulty that I shall try to meet may seem to be a very radical one. For if we are consistent must we not acknowledge our own body to be but a tissue of sensations like any external objects? Hence the various organs of sense, the nose, ear, eye, etc., the nerves connecting them within the brain and the brain itself, come to be groups of sensations, existing only in our or some one's mind. Consistency surely does demand this. For though our attention was directed at first to the external world, the same line of thought, a little more closely followed, manifestly conducts to the same conclusions respecting the nature of our own body. If the yellow of a pair of gloves I am wearing is my sensation, surely the simple flesh color of my hands is equally my sensation. If the sound of the piano does not strictly inhere in the piano, but in myself, the same must be said of the sound of my own

voice, viz., that it is not properly in my vocal organs but in my mind. If the weight of the dictionary is really a sensation I experience, equally so is the weight of my own arm when I hold it at right angles from my body. The hardness and resistance of my skull or of any bone in my body are sensations just as much as the hardness and resistance of the table at which I am sitting, or of the floor under my feet. There is no reason why we should except the sensible qualities of the nose, eye or ear or of the nerves connecting them with the brain or of the brain itself. The gray color of the matter of the brain can no more have existence outside some one's mind than any other color. The weight, texture and outlines of the nerves are matters of sensation as much as those of the blades of grass out in the field. And of themselves and out of relation to the mind both are equally mysterious; so considered, they are no longer nerves or blades of grass, but simply the unknown causes of these groups of sensible phenomena in us.

But in so saying, does not the idealist, it may be asked, cut the ground from under his own feet, since in the previous analysis he has after the manner of ordinary physiological teaching treated the various organs of sense, the nerves and brain as the very means by which

we get sensations? The question is fair and must be fairly met, and the idealist has a chance of only two alternatives: either to deny that we have any real sensations, the superstructure disappearing, as every superstructure must, with its ground-work; or to allow that the organs of sense, nerves and brain are not, in the strict sense of the words, such a means and ground-work, that the real origin of sensations is not merely partially but totally inexplicable, and that all explanatory language such as has been used is but provisional and when assuming to give an anywise strict and scientific account of the matter must be reprobated.

It is not possible to deny with any soberness that we have sensations, and so the latter alternative must be taken. The organs of sense and the nervous system cannot in any strictness be said to produce sensations, because they only exist* as sensations. The mind cannot be really dependent on the bodily organization, because the bodily organization is only a group of phenomena in and to the mind. All sensible phenomena, things as near as the beating of our own hearts and things as far as the shin-

* Only exist, that is, *save in their supersensible or transcendental causes*. This qualification I must ask my readers to bear in mind, for it would be wearisome to be continually repeating it.

ing of the stars and the sweep of systems, are equally phenomena to us and in us and have no meaning (save in their hidden ground) apart from us. However venturesome the expression may seem, idealism demands that we say that instead of the world's containing us, we contain the world; that however much meaning "outside" may have relatively to our body, it has none to the mind of man.

The idealist is aware that this seems to involve an altogether mysterious, if not unthinkable, notion of the mind. Ordinarily the mind is regarded as existing within the bodily organism and more particularly in the brain. According to idealism, however, the brain as well as body exist in the mind. What in the name of common sense, it may be asked, then, *is* this mind and where is it? Let me say by way of answer in the first place, that the assertion of the literal existence of the mind *in* the body or brain is destitute of all experimental support. We do not find the mind, however diligently and minutely we may examine the body or the nervous system. The supposed existence of the brain and all that physiology may tell us of the structure of the nervous system, may be verified; but no one has ever found a sensation or a thought in the brain or has the slightest

ground for hope that he ever will.* If one will only believe in that of which he has experimental proof, he may reasonably doubt whether there is any thought or sensation besides his own. The idealist, however, will tell us that we are altogether off the track in expecting to find the mind in this way. What the significance of the ordinary view, that the mind is connected with the brain, is, will be considered later on.† It suffices now to say that the idealist does not admit that the mind is *in*, or any wise spatially connected with, the brain. And now to answer the question, *What* is the mind? I would say, It is that which experiences sensations and thoughts, or, more simply, that which feels and thinks. And to the other question, *Where* is the mind? I would reply not that the question is unanswerable (as one might say of an inquiry in itself legitimate, the data for answering which were, however, not forthcoming), nor yet that the mind is nowhere, but that the question has, to speak accurately, no

* W. K. Clifford says, "But however powerful a microscope you used and however carefully you looked, it would be of no use to expect to see the man thinking. You would see nothing more than the merely mechanical actions that we have described hitherto, and if you expected by the use of such a powerful microscope to see anything like thought or sensation or emotion or will, you would be grievously disappointed." (*Seeing and Thinking*, p. 79.)

† Cf. p. 45.

meaning, or about as much meaning as a question would have as to the color of a certain pleasure or as to the weight avoirdupois of a pang of regret. The conception of the mind which idealism necessitates is only mysterious as we try to range the mind along with the sensible phenomena of which it takes cognizance, forgetting that it is not one of them, but that to which they exist—that is, as we by careless and inaccurate thinking *make* the mysteriousness.

But if the mind remains an intelligible something, the idealist's conception of the world at least, it may be said, makes *it* illusory; if he saves the existence of the mind, he does so at the expense of all the objects to which the mind can direct itself. Now the present writer cannot answer for all the theories that have passed current as idealism. Some have been, perhaps, hastily conceived, and are not so much interpretations of experience as departures from it and attempted flights in the air. The Idealism I am stating, however—and but for an air of presumption about such a title, I should call it Scientific* Idealism—is simply the out-

* W. K. Clifford even says that the "doctrine of Berkeley's has now been so far confirmed by the physiology of the senses that it is no longer a metaphysical speculation, but a scientifically established fact." (*Lectures and Essays*, II, 142.)

come of an analysis of what experience is. The very head and front of its offending, to the mind of the ordinary realist, is that it so resolutely holds to the ground of experience and refuses to give the name of reality to anything apart from experience (save of, course, to the transcendental and unknown cause or causes of all experience). What is the meaning, then, of an assertion that such a world of experience is illusory? Illusory means, according to the ordinary usage, what does not correspond with real facts. But in this case what are the real facts with which we can contrast the world of experience? Of facts separate (or separable) from the mind, the idealist does not allow that we know anything (the transcendental realm being left out of account—and indeed of it we *know* nothing, though we are obliged to think or posit it). All facts (in his view) are facts of mind, that is, of mental experience, and the idealistic analysis does not leave us enough reality (separate from the mind) to constitute the possibility of illusion.

The semi-idealism which has been more or less held in the past might be said to make much of the world illusory. For it asserts that matter in its essential or primary qualities (extension, resistance, motion) exists separate from the mind; hence the ordinary man's notion

that colors and sounds and odors (which the semi-idealist admits to be subjective) inhere in such an independent material world is palpably an illusion. But a thorough-going analysis finds the primary qualities of matter to be subjective in the same sense that the secondary qualities are. The whole material world is but an effect on us; hence illusory is a word inapplicable to it or to any part of it. If we had no waking hours, we should not call our dreams illusory; and it is but an affectation of knowledge to give the name of dreams to our daylight experiences. For who knows, or has reason to believe, that there *is* anything more real than these daylight experiences (outside the transcendental sources from which they come)?

But if the world, as the idealist interprets it, may not properly be called illusory, does not another difficulty arise? Are not all objects made in this way equally real, so that there remains no way in which there can be anything illusory at all? Yet any view that would allow no validity to the common distinction between real and imaginary things would run into the absurd. How does this distinction arise? How can the duality be explained save by supposing that there are two orders of existence, one in the mind and the other out of the mind? The answer is not difficult. The duality and the

distinction are not denied. The idealist simply says that the contrast is not between what is in the mind and what is outside of it, but between two orders of existence in the mind. "Illusory" means that a thought, judgment or expectation does not correspond with a sensation. Let me illustrate. Suppose that I think that I might suspend myself in mid-air, or at least that I might emulate the bold enterprise of "Darius Green and his flying-machine" and succeed better than he. I make the experiment; with the requisite paraphernalia, I venture forth from a second-story barn window. But alas! I beat my wings in vain; and after a moment's floundering I am on the ground "all'n a lump"—bruised, humiliated, undeceived. Plainly my actual experience did not correspond with my anticipation. Why then may not the anticipation be called illusory? Yet my actual experience is just as much subjective as my expectation was. Indeed the idealist may well say that only in acccordance with the terms of his theory can any ideas or expectations be proved to be illusory; for the only way is to experience some sensation or succession of sensations that contradict these ideas or expectations.

The revealer and real enemy of illusions is not any so-called reality outside and independent of us, but experience itself. The distinc-

tions of truth and error, fact and fiction, reality and illusion, have as much validity to the idealist as to any one else. For we have not only sensations, but thoughts of them—thoughts of what they were or may be; and thoughts acquiring a kind of independence of the sensations, their truth and worth can only be tested by learning whether or no they correspond to the sensations. Illusoriness can only be in our thoughts. It is meaningless to say that a pain I experience is illusory and just as meaningless that any color or sound or resistance is illusory. A thought or expectation, however, (for example, to the effect that I am going to experience a pain at a certain time or a resistance or a sound) may be illusory; or a thought or belief that I or some one else did experience such things at a certain time in the past. Mistakes are always mistakes of judgment; I may be mistaken in locating, explaining or expecting sensations, but not in experiencing them.*

The sensations are all subjective, but they are all real. No one would care to know of anything much more real than an acute pain under which he is suffering; it would hardly console him to tell him that the pain is merely

*Compare Aristotle, "The perception of the qualities peculiar to each sense is always true . . . ; thought on the contrary, may be false as well as true." (*Psychology*, III, 3, § 3, Wallace's Translation, p. 145).

a sensation. Why, then, should the world, as the idealist views it, be spoken of slightingly as *only* a tissue of sensations, *merely* subjective and the like? Why should the light, color, beauty, movement of nature be ranked less highly, because they are what we experience and not things existing whether we experience them or not?

CHAPTER III

RECONCILIATION WITH "COMMON-SENSE"

In Goethe's tragedy, after Faust has pronounced his successive curses on ambition, mammon, hope, faith and patience, the chorus of spirits laments:

> "Woe! woe!
> Thou hast it destroyed,
> The beautiful world."

They will not, however, give him over to despair, but turn upon him with divine cheer:

> "Mightier
> For the children of men,
> Brightlier
> Build it again
> In thine own bosom, build it anew."

It would be straining a comparison to say that we shall now attempt to do for the sensible world what Faust was summoned to do for the world of human aims and passions which he had so rudely destroyed. For, in truth, the idealist has not destroyed the sensible world,

(nor sought to) but only the notion (so sedulously cherished by many) of its separateness from ourselves. Indeed, if he had destroyed it, it would be quite beyond his power to build it again. For we do not create our sensations, nor can we. We do not think of color, and then by an act of will make it stand before our eyes. We cannot conjure up harmonies of sound and then actually hear them.* Our sensations come we know not how nor whence; our sole knowledge is that they are, in a very limited way, subject to our control. They come in order; but, save within certain limits, we do not determine that order, and can not determine it; we have simply to recognize and accept it, as we do the sensations themselves. In proposing a work of reconstruction, then, the idealist has no notion of evolving the world out of his own thought, or inner consciousness, so called.†

* Compare Shakespeare's lines:

"O! who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
By bare imagination of a feast?
Or wallow naked in December snow
By thinking on fantastic summer's heat?"
(*Richard II.*)

† This would be a spurious Idealism in the light of the preceding analysis. An instance of it is in the following from Emerson: "Philosophy affirms that the outward world is only phenomenal and the whole concern of dinners, of tailors, of gigs, of balls whereof men make such account, an intri-

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He wishes simply to show that his demolition of the external world has been only a demolition of a wrong opinion of it, that a *real, external world* is just as truly his property as any one's, that the words "real" and "external" have still their full meaning to him, and this without forgetting for a moment the result of his first analysis, viz., that the whole sensible world is nothing and means nothing outside of human (or other sentient) consciousness. Let us proceed to this task:

In a way that we have acknowledged to be fundamentally mysterious, we experience certain sensations. These sensations do not suggest the notion of reality, they do not lead us to infer something behind them that we may call by this name; they are reality.* A color as

cate dream, *the exhalation of the present state of the soul.*" (Cabot's *Life*, I, 217—italics are mine.) So Carlyle speaks of metaphysics teaching that the very rocks and rivers "are in strict language *made* by these outward senses of ours." (*French Revolution*, Book I, chap. 12.) Yet it must be admitted that this is in accordance with popular notions of Idealism; and according to so careful a writer as Professor George P. Fisher, it is the doctrine "that sense-perception is a modification of the mind which is due exclusively to its own nature aud *is elicited by no external object.*" (*Princeton Review*, July, 1882—italics are mine.) But because the outward world is our experience, (and not a something apart from us), it does not follow that we give it to ourselves.

*Professor Huxley says of odor: "To say that I am aware of this phenomenon, or that I have it, or that it exists, are simply different modes of affirming the same facts. If I am

such, a resistance as such, is real just as a pain is; there is nothing to us human beings that can be more real; and in fact our very notions of reality are not prior to, but are based upon these simple and direct sensible experiences. Where these sensations are to be located, how they are to be connected, what is their place in a final system of thought—these are other questions; but the sensations themselves are nowise problematical or derived; they are the data and material with the immediate and unquestioning acceptance of which our intellectual processes must begin. Moreover, these sensations do not come at hap-hazard. As we have already said, they do not (save within limits) obey our direction, either in the time and place of their arising, or in their manner of succeeding one another. Though our experiences, they are in another sense independent of us—that is, independent of our wishes, or will. We have to *learn* of them as truly as if they were alien existences having no kind of relation to ourselves; and we do soon learn that they are associated with or succeed one another in regular or fixed ways; and hence a world, a cosmos as opposed

asked how I know that it exists, I can only reply that my knowledge is immediate or intuitive, and, as such, professed of the highest conceivable degree of certainty." (*Science and Culture*, p. 258). The idealist conceives that this is the way in which all material phenomena exist.

to a chaos, evolves itself out of our experiences. The groups of associated sensations we call objects—the difficulty of making out and distinguishing the same being simply that of discovering which out of the numberless sensations thronging upon us are really associated. The uniformities of succession among objects we call laws, the exact formulation of which is a still more intricate and difficult task. It may, perhaps, be unfortunate that we have no other word than "law" to designate a uniformity of succession, since in politics and ethics (not to say religion), where the word was, perhaps, first used, it has quite a different meaning.* But if the scientific use of it is defined, as it ordinarily is by physical investigators, there is no need of our being confused by it, though the inferences not infrequently made from the laws of nature to a law giver show that this confusion often exists.

One of these groups of sensations is our own

*A law in politics or ethics, it hardly needs saying, prescribes what men are to do or ought to do; a law in physics, and in natural science generally, is simply a statement of actual facts. The laws of the state and of morality are frequently disobeyed; those of physics are never disobeyed and cannot be. In fact, obedience and disobedience are misleading terms in the physical sphere. Bodies do not fall in obedience to the law of gravitation, but the law of gravitation is simply a statement of the general fact that they do fall. See a clear statement in Professor Huxley's *Introductory Primer*, § 9.

body. It is true that all phenomena are our own according to the idealistic hypothesis—a stone, or a tree, or a star equally with the body. But there are reasons for calling the latter especially our own. First, we have a double set of sensations in connection with our body. When I strike my face with my hand, I experience not only a sensation of resistance in my hand but also one in my face. When, however, I strike the stone, I have but a single sensation, viz., in my hand. The assertion may be ventured that if the stone on being struck gave me a sensation as myown face does when struck, I should though quite perplexed and mystified feel that in some way it was a part of me. It may be questioned, indeed, whether my own body does not mean so much of the sensible world as yields these double sensations. A second reason is that with these sensations we call our body, is connected our general power of sensation. We are not so dependent on the stone or tree or star; if any particular one of these were removed or destroyed we could see or feel quite as well as before. But if the minor groups of sensations I call my ear is removed, I no longer hear; if my eyes are plucked out, I no longer see. Yes, though the external organs remain uninjured, if but those delicate fibres connecting them with the brain

be destroyed or only severed, I no longer hear or see; and if that group of sensations we call the brain exists no longer, not only hearing and sight vanish, but all power of thought (so far as we know) vanishes too. The light of a candle may be snuffed out and the candle be lit again. The snuffed-out light of human life and thought is, humanly speaking, incapable of restoration. As Othello says in the last fateful scene with the sleeping Desdemona:

> "Put out the light—and then put out thy light:
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
> I can thy former light restore,
> Should I repent me:—but once put out thy light,
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume."

In this way it is possible for the idealist to do ample justice to those common-sense notions of the dependence of the mind upon the body, which he may seem to make light of. The mind *is* dependent on the body in the sense that our general power of sensation and thought is connected with those sensations we call our body. Why this should be so is quite mysterious. Neither physics nor physiology nor psychology explains it, though each of these sciences may present a most careful and detailed statement of facts to be explained. Why my power of perceiving colors should be linked

with the particular group of sensations I call my eye, I utterly fail to understand. Why it should not be equally well linked with some other group (or with no group at all and I thus be but mind with no bodily organism whatever) I can not in any way discover. But it is enough for the practical uses of life, and enough for science, that does not concern itself about ultimate questions, to recognize that there is this connection. And, further, it must be stated that we have no proof that any other connection—not to say the absence of all connection—is or ever has been actual, so that the notion of pure mind or spirit may be, for all we know, an entirely vain one, though it must be recognized as abstractly possible.

It would, however, be a totally unwarrantable leap to infer from all this that the organs of sense are anywise causally related to sensations, or that the body in general is causally related to the mind. It would, indeed, be forgetting that the organs of sense as being themselves so many groups of sensible phenomena only exist in the mind, and that the body is simply a part of our mental experience. My body is not a cause but a sign of my mental existence—a sign, that is, to some one else, or to myself if I could need a sign. If I should become blind, the condition of my visual organs would

not be properly explanatory but simply indicatory to another of the fact, and it would be indicatory to me if I could need any proof of that which I already knew. So death as a physical fact can not be seriously called an explanation of the cessation of mental activity, though the two for all we know may be inseparably connected. Death as a series of sensible phenomena can only exist in some one's mental apprehension; when my own time comes, for example, it will be simply a sign to some one else of the cessation of my mental life, and might be an equally significant sign to myself if I could die and observe my dying at the same time. For, if no one is present or observes me, there would be no physical death, properly so-called, but simply the inexplicable fact of my ceasing to feel and think. Fundamentally mysterious in the same manner is man's birth and indeed all the stages of his earthly existence. Explanation is there for none of them; the explanations and causes of which we are accustomed to speak in the sphere of sensible phenomena are but man's own experiences, and so far from their explaining man, man is necessary to explain them. What in turn explains man is the world-riddle.

Nor is Science any wise inconsistent with such a view. The results of the physical sci-

ences, of physiology and even of physiological psychology are the same on any theory. They all have to do with mental experiences, according to the idealist. He will not care to interpose a word save when the physical or physiological investigator speaks of objects as literally outside* the mind, or considers laws to signify more than matter-of-fact connections, or uses necessity in a sense which Professor Huxley emphatically repudiates.† Idealism is not a question of any special science, but relates to a general understanding of all the sciences. As here considered it must not be identified with *a priori* systems of thought, with transcendentalism or intuitionalism, as those words are frequently understood. It is no wise inconsistent with the view that all our knowledge of the sensible world is gained by experience, that is, with pure empiricism. In fact, idealism may claim to have a special affinity with the spirit and methods of modern science, since science, too, calls for experience and does not concern itself about matters that lie beyond experience. If any object can not actually or conceivably be brought within the range of sensible experience, it is as good as non-existent to

*Popularly the language is perfectly allowable, as will be explained further on.

† *Lay Sermons*, p. 144.

the scientific investigator; and this may be said without implying that the scientific investigator may not forget his special and after all rather limited rôle, and as a human being conjecture and speculate and hope and believe like the rest of mankind.

Let us now consider briefly the meaning of the externality of the world. The externality of one's own body means very little unless the thought is that one's body is not a mere idea, but a real group of sensations. For that our body is literally external to ourselves has meaning only if "ourselves" has some position, relatively to which the body is external. But, as we have seen, there is no warrant for such an assertion, "ourselves" being simply that to which the body and all sensible objects exist and have meaning. Few, however, are concerned about so awkward and doubtful a conception as the externality of our own body, and that about which we are concerned—the reality of the world external to our body—the idealist may assert as unhesitatingly as the most vigorous defender of common sense. And this is the interpretation the idealist puts upon the ordinary opinion that there is a world outside of ourselves, viz., it means that there is a world outside our body. The ellipsis is easily explicable since our body is "ourselves" in a sense that

no other group of phenomena is, as before explained. And why should we not as immediately know a world external to the body as the body itself? The hardness of the ground I may know just as immediately as I do that of my cranium. The color of another's eyes I can note even more easily than I can that of my own. The external world is not to be called an inference. Such a way of speaking rests on misconceptions which it has been the endeavor of this essay to clear up. Neither common sense nor genuine philosophy countenances it. It is half-enlightenment. The whole sensible world—the ground as well as the human body that stands upon it, the air as well as the lungs, and the heavens as well as the earth—all is equally real and is known with equal immediateness; that is, it is real viewed as the real experience of some sentient subject, and unreal—and the whole equally unreal—if regarded as a self-subsisting thing apart from a sentient subject. Hence the renewed necessity for asserting the purely provisional character of the language used at the beginning of this inquiry. The external world is not, in any strictness, simply certain mysterious entities in the brain at the other end of complicated nerve-processes. If so pitiable a reduction were made of this vast and splendid

spectacle about us, the idealist could hardly receive or merit the serious attention of his fellow-men. The world is as great—yes, possibly as infinite—in extent and duration to the idealist as to any one; for it is not merely what we experience, but all we can experience and all that we can conceive that we might experience, if there were no limits to our powers. In fact a limitless experience would be but another name for a limitless world, and the so-called "mysterious entities" in the brain, it had better be acknowledged, are a fiction. Physiology can get along well enough without them; and the true office of physiology, it may be remarked, is not to discover for us the causes of sensations, but to investigate a certain group of sensations—viz; those that make up what we call our bodily organisms. Indeed in the idealistic theory all the sciences become in some sense branches of psychology* and it may be questioned whether there can be any separate science bearing that name. If there is to be, it must be either an account of each individual's own mental experiences (or world), or of general human powers of sensation and thought as opposed to the content or objects with which they are concerned.†

* Compare Aristotle's language: "The soul is in a way all existing things." (*Psychology*, III, 8, § 1.)

† The distinction between states of consciousness and

For the distinction between subject and object is valid to the idealist, as it must be to every one who thinks. A color is not strictly speaking ourselves, nor is an odor or a resistance. They are what we experience and the full statements would be—we perceive the color, and scent the odor and feel the resistance. It is even possible at times to realize that the pain we may experience is not strictly ourselves, but that under which we suffer, though pains and pleasures are not shapeable into definite objects as other sensations are. The idealist only insists that the object shall not be separated from the subject and treated as if it were a thing in itself. We are all aware how the moonbeams seem to follow us as we go along a stream of water on a moonlight night. According to the idealist—and here according to the ordinary teaching of the physicist as well—they do follow us, and as rays of light have no existence apart from us, the idealist simply adding that this is true in respect to all material existence. But for all this, the moonbeams are not ourselves, and sensible phenomena in general (nor

external objects (as the subject matter, respectively, of psychology and the physical sciences) is a fictitious one. External objects exist only (save in their transcendental causes) as states of consciousness, actually or potentially.

the whole sum of them) are not ourselves, though it may be, for all we know, that we can have no existence apart from them any more than they from us.

Sensible is perhaps a good, if technical, word for a sensation viewed on its objective side; for, meaning as it does, *that which may be perceived or felt*, it immediately suggests that which perceives or feels—viz; the subject, which alone is *sentiens*. Subject and object so taken are evidently not inferences from sensations, but analytical statements of what sensation implies. Neither of them means a substance (in the nebulous sense of that word, i. e., some unknowable entity behind the sensation), the one being simply that which knows and the other that which is known. For the sake of the utmost clearness it might be well to use the word *sensibilia* wherever sensations are regarded on their objective side; since sound, color, weight, etc., are not sensations in the sense of being themselves sentient or of implying a sentient subject behind them, save in the case of those groups of sensations we call other human beings (or animals or the lower sentient creation generally); but are rather the content of (or objective element in) sensations. Hence, it could be said as it was (in effect) earlier that our own sensations never reveal to

us sensations in another. Our own sensations have for their content or object simply material qualities. The sensations of others are not a matter of observation, but of inference, and exist only to our imagination or thought. The different meanings of words have in general to be intrusted to the intelligence of the reader unless a scholastic precision of statement is attempted. Moreover, the purpose of these chapters is not to build up a complete theory of existence, but simply to bring out the subjective implications of material phenomena (of which we are ordinarily unconscious). "*Sensibilia*" excellently combines both the objective and subjective meanings of these phenomena—for the phenomena are objective in the sense that they are objects to the mind and not the mind itself, and they are subjective in the sense that they imply the mind to which they exist.

And yet a consequence of idealism must now be more distinctly considered which may seem almost to cancel the merit of the reconstructive efforts we have been making. Reality (save in the transcendental sense) being placed in our experience and not in something apart from experience, what can be said of objects when we do not experience them? A rather awkward phrase has already been used now and then—possible sensation. It can hardly

be defined save by showing how the idealist is led to use it. An odor that we scent is real; it is real in our sensation of it; what, then, is it when we do not scent it? Plainly, we can only answer, a possible sensation or reality. And we may accustom ourselves to this view of odors, and, perhaps, of sounds, without much difficulty; but it seems almost impossible to realize it in connection with colors and resistances. Can it be, we ask, that the grass is green only when we look at it and the ground hard only when we tread upon it? Look at the grass as often as we like and turn upon it as stealthy glances as we can, it always has this color. But, in this very simple illustration, is it not possible that we can discover our real meaning in calling it always green? How do we know it to be so when we do not look at it? Surely we do not know. But this we know, that, look at it as often as we like, we always find it so; it was so this morning and is this afternoon and will be, we are sure, tomorrow and next day, and so on, as long as the summer lasts and we may run back with equal confidence in the past. How, then, can we better express our confidence that these sensations are so continuously possible, than by saying that the grass is always green, and since it is so independently of our will, that it

is so quite apart from ourselves? This is simply popular language, by no means misleading or untrue. It is only when put to exact philosophical uses and made to mean that color is independent of our sensations that the idealist cares to interpose; and here let me renew a statement already in substance made, that it is not his object to deny any of the common convictions of men so much as to show what they really are—that is, how they arose and what they mean. "The ground is always hard" *means* that we have always found it so, and believe we shall always find it so, and, as we can easily in thought go beyond the limits of our own lives, that this will be the experience of men in the future, whether after fifty or five hundred years. Similarly we may go out in space and say that distant objects are hard, having the same confidence as to the moon's surface that we have as to the top brick of a neighboring chimney—meaning in both cases not that they are so irrespective of ourselves (or any sentient being) but simply that, if we go near enough, we shall find them so. The world thus means an order of possible (rather than actual) sensations, stretching out in space and backward and forward in time.*

*No realistic view of space and time is here necessarily implied. Space and time may be simply abstractions from

Does then the world, as more than the limited number of our actual sensations, exist only to our imagination or thought? Yes, though with a decided difference from those of our imaginations and thoughts which are not capable of being converted into experience. The scientific imagination is no more an arbitrary thing than sensation. I can indeed fancy what I like, can think of trees with their roots in the air, of horses with ten legs, etc., but scientific imagination is that which limits itself, viz., to real possibilities of sensation, and simply presents to us a large and flowing picture of these possibilities. And imagination may present us with sensations that were possible at a time when no sentient being actually existed and hence never became actual sensations; for example, the appearance of the earth in the earliest geological epochs. Yes, the steps antecedent to the separate existence of the earth, passing along which the scientific imagination rises to the thought of an original fiery mist or nebula, are but the stages of a possible experience, which we might think of ourselves as having, though in fact no sentient beings of the kind that we know could possibly have existed then. And the conversion of the nebu-

our sensible experience, so far as the necessities of Idealism are concerned. Whether they are so, is a question that does not now concern us.

lar hypothesis into an assured knowledge (if that were possible) would not be due to a leap from ourselves out into "reality" so called, but to an ascertaining that what we before *conjectured* to have been a possible experience, we now somehow *know* to have been a possible experience and the only possible one. Once with the notion of fixedness in my present possibilities of experience, I can, as I do, unhesitatingly entend it to all past time as well as to the most distant space. Idealism introduces not one particle of uncertainty or variability into the whole realm with which science deals.* So imagination may present us with

*Though, of course, knowledge attaches only to the experience of the moment, and memory like expectation is a kind of belief, there is a clear line of distinction between beliefs with regard to what were (or might have been or may become) matters of experience and those relating to matters of which there can be, in the present state of our faculties, no experience—e. g., the whole sphere of the supersensible. The former are scientific, the latter speculative beliefs.

As to the general question of the compatibility of the positive sciences with the idealistic theory, I cannot resist the temptation to quote the remarks of one of the most penetrating of American thinkers, the late Chauncey Wright. After saying (in a letter to Francis E. Abbot) that Idealism is rather a definition of the nature of certain objects than a denial of their existence, he goes on, "there is nothing in positive science or the study of phenomena and their laws which idealism conflicts with. (See Berkeley). Astronomy is just as real a science, as true an account of phenomena and their laws, if phenomena are only mental states as on any other theory. You say that the facts and laws of the universe recorded in Humboldt's 'Cosmos' were in nowise conditional on the existence of Humboldt's mind,

the supposed waves of the ethereal medium, with the molecules and atoms out of which the world is believed to be constructed, and with the particles of our own brains, which could only become actual sensations (to ourselves or to any one else) at the risk of all further power of sensation on our part.

Are, then, all these objects that exist to our imagination not real objects? Is the brain of each one of us but a thought? and was the earth, antecedent to the appearance of sentient beings upon it, but a possibility and not a reality? An inquiry might, indeed, be made as to the final meaning of reality; but adhering to the ordinary notion of it as something possessed of sensible qualities, there is no way

or of any other human mind. I readily admit that little or nothing characteristic of an individual mind like Humboldt's would be likely to appear among the recorded facts and laws of the universe; yet these facts and laws are accounts of things seen and heard and weighed and smelt and tasted. They are the orders of invariable and unconditional sequences and coexistences among the sensations of colors and sounds and pressures and odors and savors, none of which could exist without a mind. These facts and laws, you say, "survive the death of generation after generation of scientific men;" but as they describe what only eyes can see and ears hear, some sort of minds, human or other, scientific or vulgar, are essential to their continued existence. What would be those aspects of the heavens which astronomers observe and predict, if no minds were in existence? Nothing surely but a potentiality. A statement of what can be seen under given circumstances must surely include the circumstances of the presence of eyes with a mind to see." (*Letters*, p. 132).

of escape for the idealist; he must give an affirmative answer. The brain has a gray color only when some one sees it, and its varied texture means nothing save in some one's experience. The earth, as a combination of sensible qualities and objects, began with the first sentient existence upon it. The brains of all of us living men exist only (save in their transcendental causes) to our imagination. Flowers have, strictly speaking, no sweetness to waste on the desert air. The violets I may find on a lonely ramble in the woods, and which I am sure no one saw before me, did not exist as violets till I found them. What gives them to me I know not, though they are gifts and imply a giver as well as a receiver. I do not create them by coming upon them and I could not, if I would, change them at will, turning them into daises or roses. And I might have found them an hour or a day or perhaps a week before, and this continual possibility of experience I may picture under the form of their actual existence all this time. And so may I picture my own brain, or the earth long before man or any sentient creature appeared on it. They are all true pictures, for they are pictures of what we might experience or might have experienced, but they are only pictures and have no meaning apart from those who sketch

or comtemplate them. And if there is or was no actual experience, there is or was no reality (save in the transcendental sense of that word).

The reader, who, whether a philosopher or not, is sure that he is not lacking in common sense, will perhaps turn from such a conclusion in disgust. And though the idealist is very loath to part company with common sense, since he conceives it his duty to interpret and not to contradict the common opinions of mankind—and knows that he has no other instrument for his conclusions than men in general have for theirs, namely, human reason, and that a real contradiction would logically necessitate skepticism—yet as simple matter of psychological fact, he may admit for himself that it is no easy thing to bear his theory always in mind. Idealism is not what he naturally and habitually thinks; it is the result of analysis and reflection, and implies an open-mindedness, a patience and a determination to think that are not with us as a gift of nature and are rarely used by us save to reach some tangible or practical goal. Philosophy may be acknowledged to be not unlike ethics in that it holds before us not so much what is (in our thoughts), as what ought to be. We know in our moments of moral seriousness what we ought to do, yet in the stress and struggle of life we may often

forget the moral ideal and even seek to excuse or justify whatever line of conduct we pursue. So in an hour of philosophical reflection we may clearly see that the world about us, "all the choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth," (to quote from Bishop Berkeley) are but our sensations and no more separate from us than our triumphs or our pains; that the world is our world and that its greatness instead of belittling us is, in one sense, our own greatness; and yet in our ordinary work-a-day existence forget the philosophical truth, lose sight of the significance of our intellectual being, divide ourselves into mind and body, contrast the world within with the world without, sensation and reality, and become hardened and stiffened in all the customary abstractions, which, no doubt, serve a purpose, else they would not be made, but are after all but a kind of working armor for this earthly life, and have no fixedness or finality to the mind within. It is the mind that has made these abstractions and the mind can unmake them, or what is the same, transcend them. It can in times, not of aberration or affectation of transcendental insights; but of simple genuine thinking, throw off the armor and breathe free. And philosophy is injured no more than ethics by allowing that we do not always heed its demands. It is enough

that when we think we know it to be true, as it is enough that when our moral nature rises from its sleep, we know that the good and the just are intrinsically binding upon us.

And yet there is such a thing as intellectual seriousness. A genuine moral seriousness will not allow us to think of the good as simply a fair ideal which we may now and there recall only for the sake of a kind of æsthetic satisfaction; it makes us set our hearts upon the ideal and turn life into a prolonged endeavor to realize its requirements. So intellectual seriousness is not consistent with recognizing the truth at one moment and the next forgetting it, not to say contradicting it; an effort must at least be made to bring the truth of philosophy into our habitual thoughts. And the objection can not be allowed to be valid that idealism may possibly answer as a theory for the closet, but will not do for the street and practical life. Because a headache is a sensation, I need to be no less wary in guarding against it by proper exercise and diet. Because a resistance is only a sensation, I may be none the less on the lookout that I do not experience it too forcibly; for there may be signs of its possible approach as truly as there may be signs of an approaching headache. What difference, I should like to know, does it make to me whether the pave-

ment is always hard or not, so long as I always *find it* so, and am sure I always shall? Expectation may be so vivid and confident as to amount to knowledge. I might even say that we have no practical concern whatever with the qualities of bodies, save as we believe we may experience them. Why should I fear a falling stone more than a falling feather, save as I know that a very recognizable sensation will come from the one that will not come from the other?

Yet if all this were not true, the honest and philosophical way to meet idealism would be not to expose the practical absurdity of it, nor to find fault with any of its remote general conclusions, but to turn back upon its premises and test the truth of its fundamental assumptions and these assumptions are, in the language of Herbert Spencer,* that "what we are

*This language may be quoted without implying that Mr. Spencer always speaks consistently with it. Elsewhere (*Psychology*, § 469) he speaks of ideas as depending on pre-existent nervous plexuses and waves of molecular motion much in the manner of the ordinary uncritical realist. But what are these nervous plexuses and waves of molecular motion? Are they not material and as such possessed of, at least, the essential properties of matter? And does not Mr. Spencer teach that the properties of matter are "subjective affections?" How then, can these affections be treated as if they were independent of the subject and capable of producing effects in it? Professor Huxley has distinctly attempted to harmonize whatever inconsistency may seem to lie in his own assertions, now of idealism, and now

conscious of as properties of matter, even down to its weight and resistance, are but subjective affections produced by objective agencies which are unknown and unknowable" (*Psychology*, § 86) —a sentence which contains in brief the whole of what I have been saying. So if any one of the properties of matter is not such a "subjective affection," but a reality apart from all subjective affections, idealism is overthrown and the sensible world to this extent exists as truly when we do not experience it as when we do.

of materialism, and idealism is always with him the ultimate truth, though not so much by contradicting as by furnishing a solvent for materialism. (See his *Hume*, pp. 78, 79, and *Science and Culture*, p. 280). From Professor Huxley the present writer wishes to acknowledge that he received his first lessons in idealism, though he can not assume that his teacher will approve of the detailed elaboration of the theory here presented.



CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It may be well in closing this inquiry to formally enumerate some of the implications and consequences of the idealistic theory:

I. *Reality* (so far as material things are concerned) is not to be opposed to sensation, but is sensation, actual or possible. *Truth*, in this realm, means not the correspondence of sensation to some reality apart from it, but of thought to sensation.

II. *Matter* is not the cause of our sensations, not a metaphysical substratum behind them, but a general name for the sensations, viewed on their objective side (pleasure and pain excepted). And *force*, it may be added, as science can deal with it, is not a mystical entity behind material phenomena, but is these phenomena themselves viewed in certain relations to one another. A stone as such, an arm as such, a head of water (as so much weight in such and such a position) are forces, actual or

potential; that is, they can produce, (or what is the same, be followed by) changes in the state of other objects.* If we use force in another sense we venture into a metaphysical region with which science is not concerned.

III. *Phenomena* (that is, sensations) are not to be classed in philosophical strictness as physical and mental, since all phenomena as such are mental. But we may either experience phenomena or think of them; that is, we may have sensations or thoughts, and the latter may be called *par éminence*, mental or psychical phenomena. *Noumena* are the unknown causes of sensations necessarily posited if we regard sensations as effects in us. If matter is regarded as an independent reality, it is difficult to see why the term "phenomenon" should be applied to it; and if it is applied, what other than verbal reason there can be for supposing the existence of noumena. Matter, in such an understanding of it, becomes itself noumenal.

IV. *Object* is a group or assemblage of phenomena (sensations) and *law* is a statement of a constant relation obtaining between objects. *Mind* is not a mysterious somewhat lying back of thoughts and sensations, but simply that which thinks and feels; not a substance, but a subject.

* For light on this point the writer is indebted to Prof. William James. (*The Feeling of Effort*, pp. 29, 30).

Substance is a conception liable to lead us astray in other than material connections, and, if used, should at least be carefully defined. Substance and attribute, or subject and predicate, are purely logical categories when applied to non-sentient objects (e. g., in the proposition, a stone is hard), though, perhaps, containing the harmless illusion that the qualities of objects have some such centre of unity as we call subject or ego in ourselves.

V. *The causative instinct* does not find an answer to its questionings in the sphere of sensible phenomena. Sensible phenomena are but so many effects, though so orderly in their connections that from one phenomenon we may often with well-nigh unlimited practical certainty infer the existence of others associated with it. Science studies these phenomena and their connections; and if it speaks of cause and effect, it means antecedent and consequent; if it speaks of necessary connection, it means no more than matter-of-fact invariability of connection. The causative instinct impels, then, to metaphysical speculation. *Metaphysics*, in the idealistic theory, is not concerned with the last elements of the sensible world, but with the causes of this world, its elements included. Whether metaphysics can ever become more than a problem remains undetermined; it can not,

however, become science—i.e, verified speculation—in the present state of human faculties.

VI. *Idealism in nowise affects any truth of science*, and for all that it asserts, pure empiricism may be the true philosophy. It simply holds that all the truths of science are truths of mental experience (actual or possible). But none of the mind's objects (which are its experiences) can explain the mind itself. They have no existence (save in their unknown causes) outside the mind, and hence assertions, as that "mind is a function of the brain," however popularly allowable, are in philosophical strictness either tautology or illusion. The general significance of idealism is simply that mind (that is, sentient existence of some sort) is made essential to the system of sensible things. It is no longer an incident, a by-play, a result of organization, comparable to the perfume of a rose or the music of a piano, but the indispensable prerequisite of any sensible existence.

The world-problem is thereby simplified. It is no longer to account for mind and matter, (in the separate sense) but for mind and its experiences. Idealism (as here stated) is not, however, itself a solution, being only a clear statement of what the problem is; and for all that such idealism can say, the problem may be insoluble.

VII. *Materialism* is not to be met by direct attack any more than common-sense, from which it is not essentially different. It is not so much an untrue as an approximate way of thinking. Its only weakness is that it does not understand the meaning of its own terms. The doctrine of the indestructibility of matter, for example, is perfectly true. But what does it mean? To uncritical minds, it seems to assert a brute datum existing outside of us, surviving our coming and going, a kind of material deity. But scientifically speaking, the indestructibility of matter means the unchangeability of the weight of its elements. Weight, however, means pressure, and pressure is what a sentient being feels or might feel and has in consequence no meaning apart from sentient beings. The indestructibility of matter is really a statement of the constancy of certain sensations. Materialism thus simply needs to be led to reflect. It does not stand to idealism as a rival philosophy, but is simply a naïve, uncritical way of thinking, while idealism, if true, is philosophy—philosophy being (as I use the term now) no more than thought cleared of obscurity and assumption. The only charge against materialism is, that it can be finally stated only in terms of idealism; and hence it may itself become idealism if it will but abandon the

schoolboy "cocksureness" which is too apt to characterize it, and proceed to the not always welcome task of self-examination.

PART II—ETHICAL

CHAPTER I

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DUTY?—THE ELEMENTS OF THE IDEA

The human mind may turn its attention in two directions. It may either study what is or think of what should be. In the former case it is strictly bound by the facts which lie before it; in the latter, it is free to escape the limits of the actual and to picture what in contradistinction to the actual we call the ideal.

Let us imagine ourselves observing the workings of another's mind. We see, perhaps, that his thoughts are confused and that his reasoning is careless and illogical; that he is swayed more or less by his prejudices—that his instinctive aversions and attractions tend to rule his mental processes. We have no choice but to recognize this, if we wish to have an idea of the man as he is. And yet we can hardly avoid conceiving of him as thinking accurately

and logically; we may be said to do so by implication if not explicitly, if we pass any judgment on him at all. In this case, we conceive him as we should be rather than as he is. Or suppose we observe the habits of a community. We may notice the way its members treat one another, the employers those whom they employ, parents their children, the rulers the citizens; we may note the institutions and the laws. And then again we may conjure up in our minds the same community as ruled in all its relations by the principles of justice and love. In the one case we have as the result a scientifically faithful picture; in the other case, a picture that has no scientific worth whatever, that is actually false, and yet in which, if it were true, the mind would rest satisfied.

In our own every day behavior, we constantly make the same distinction. What we do is often one thing and what we admit we ought to do quite another; the one belongs to the category of the actual, the other to that of the ideal.

For convenience's sake we may characterize these different exercises of the mind by different names; the one we may call "scientific," the other "speculative." In the one we are guided by observation and experience; in fact our resulting conceptions are but an account of what

we observe or experience. But in conceiving of what should be we are without this guidance; in the nature of the case, the ideal—so long as it is the ideal—is what we do not experience. There may be, of course, a different use of terms. Conceptions may be called "scientific" simply in so far as they are clear (i. e., free from obscurity and confusion) and systematic (or as much so as the nature of the object will allow). Yet if we use this nomenclature and by science mean simply clarified and orderly as opposed to confused and unsystematic thought, we are none the less obliged to distinguish between experiential (or experimental) science and speculative science, the one covering our verified or verifiable knowledge, the other a knowledge (if such it can be called) that is in its nature unverifiable and is only gained by a free *excursus* of the mind. In other words, the distinction in ideas remains, however we may characterize it in words.*

* Arthur James Balfour, in his *A Defense of Philosophic Doubt*, (London, 1879) argues for the "truth," that "Scientific judgments and ethical judgments deal with essentially different subject-matters." "Every scientific proposition," he says, "asserts either the nature of the relation of space or time between phenomena which have existed, do exist, or will exist; or defines the relations of space or time which would exist if certain changes and simplifications were made in the phenomena (as in ideal geometry), or in the law governing the phenomena (as in ideal physics). Roughly speaking, it may be said to state facts or events, real or hypothetical.

A certain rudimentary classification of the various Sciences or Disciplines is involved in such a distinction. In accordance with it, Logic is clearly marked off from Psychology. For Logic deals with certain rules of thinking which few persons perfectly observe, while Psychology includes mental acts and states whatever their ideal worth or character. In Psychology many parts of the soul's life may have a place, which in Logic would be only examples of what should not be. Æsthetics is similarly distinguished from all merely descriptive science; it deals not with whatever exists about or among us, but with standards of the mind, and with actual objects only so far as

An ethical proposition, on the other hand, though, like every other proposition, it states a relation, does not state a relation of space or time. 'I ought to speak the truth,' for instance, does not imply that I have spoken, do speak, or shall speak the truth; it asserts no bond of causation between subject and predicate, nor any co-existence, nor any sequence. It does not announce an event; and if some people would say that it stated a fact, it is not certainly a fact either of the 'external' or of the 'internal' world." (p. 336).

Again, "In one sense, therefore, all ethics is 'à priori.' It is not, and never can be, founded on experience. Whether we be Utilitarians, or Egoists, or Intuitionists, by whatever name we call ourselves, the rational basis of our system must be something other than an experience or a series of experiences; for such always belong to Science." (p. 338).

The chapter, "On the Idea of a Philosophy of Ethics," from which these quotations are made, is one of the most trenchant discussions of fundamental ethical philosophy that I have ever read.



they correspond with them or suggest them. The beautiful is an idea, a standard within, not a transcript from without, whatever its ultimate psychological genesis. Politics, too, as an art, is another thing from Politics as an historical science; it does not essentially make so much difference whether it be a mean art or a noble one—in either case it presupposes ends that are desired in addition to facts that exist; and a rational and humane Politics would be simply one that used history and experience to rational and humane ends instead of base ones, and learned from the past, perhaps, as much by departing from its footsteps as by following in them.

What is ordinarily called Political Economy may be said to actually suffer from a lack of clarification as to whether its subject-matter belongs to the one realm or the other. "The Laws of Political Economy" has been a phrase to conjure with. These laws are said to be necessary and invariable; and at the same time warning is uttered against interfering with them. But if necessary and invariable they cannot be interfered with; and if as the warning implies they can be interfered with, they are not necessary and invariable. The fact is that "laws" in this instance is used in two senses; on the one hand as describing what actually happens when

persons are animated by intelligent self-interest and by that alone in striving for wealth; and on the other hand, as an ideal rule prescribing what should happen. The law of supply and demand, particularly as it affects wages, is an example. If an employer is not dominated by self-interest he may disregard the law considered as an ideal rule, while as a statement of what happens it still remains true of the average conduct of men in the business world.* The economist would do well to ask himself distinctly at the outset, What is it I am aiming to do? Is my object to explore the actual world of industrial society and to give a report of how industrial needs are being met, or it is to teach men how they should act in industrial affairs, whether as regards the ends to be realized or the fittest means to accomplish them? For in the one case, it is science that will be the result of his labors, and in the other, speculation. Both may be valuable and both may well be sought after; but only harm can come from not being aware that they are distinct results.†

* "To refer an injustice in the economic world to demand and supply may possibly account for it; but it cannot be seriously maintained that from the point of view of the moralist or the social reformer this settles the matter." (John N. Keynes, *The Scope and Method of Political Economy*, London, 1891, p. 41).

† Dr. Keynes' work just cited is a gratifying proof that the distinction I have contended for is beginning to be re-

On the other hand, instances of science, pure and simple, are Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Sociology; these have absolutely nothing to do with ideal conceptions (i. e., conceptions of what should be.)

But the realm of the ideal, however contrasted it be with that of reality, has a peculiar relation to it. To speak metaphorically, the ideal waits to become real. It is the ideal *of* reality, it is that which reality should become—it is the goal toward which reality should aspire. Now an ideal may be incorporated into reality in two ways: either unconsciously (so far as the object in question is concerned), spontaneously, without effort, as a clock performs its function of striking at the right time, as the moist particles in the atmosphere take their places in a drop of rain, as the trees grow and blossom; or because the object in question

cognized. He says, "In regard to the scope of political economy, no question is more important, or in a way more difficult, than its true relations to practical problems. Does it treat of the actual or of the ideal? Is it a positive science concerned exclusively with the investigation of uniformities, or is it an art having for its object the determination of practical rules of action? . . . As the terms are here used, a positive science may be defined as a body of systematized knowledge concerning what is; a normative or regulative science as a body of systematized knowledge discussing criteria of what ought to be, and concerned, therefore, with the ideal as distinguished from the actual; an art as a system of rules for the attainment of a given end. . . . The problem whether political economy is to be regarded as a positive science, or as a normative science, or as an art,

thinks of the ideal, and aims at it, and strives for it. We are clearly enough aware of the distinction in our own experience. Our bodies grow with scarcely any will of our own, and sometimes attain shapes of surprising beauty. Our minds attain a certain development with scarcely any effort that we are aware of. Sometimes we might almost be said to be good without meaning or wishing to be. And, in moments to which we give the name "inspired," even the work of our hands, our art, the monuments of our thought grow

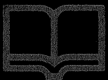
" . . as grows the grass."

Yet it is often the case, perhaps oftenest, that we have to labor for the ideal good we think of; and if we do not labor for it or think of it it does not come to us at all. The ideal then, (I mean what is not fancifully but really such

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or as a combination of these, is, to a certain extent, a question merely of nomenclature and classification. It is, nevertheless, most important to distinguish economic inquiries according as they belong to the three departments respectively; and it is also important to make clear their mutual relations. Confusion between them is common and has been the source of many mischevious errors." (pp. 31-35). The whole chapter from which this is taken, "On the Relation of Political Economy to Morality and Practice," should be read.

I should add that Prof. Henry Sidgwick, in his *The Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1883), also recognizes the distinction. See particularly the first paragraph of chapter II. of the Introduction, which has the heading, "Is Political economy a Science, concerned with what is, or an art, concerned with what ought to be?"



—for I shall speak later of the necessity of this qualification)* may attain realization or it may not; it does not follow of necessity that what ought to be will be any more than that it is already; and it is at this point that we pass from the ideal in general to the ethical in particular. The ethical is so much of the ideal as depends upon us for its realization. The good that takes place of itself (as we may say), the beautiful or beneficent in nature, for example, or the unwilled and unintended good in human history, the good that we can hardly help any more than hinder, that nature herself provides for, is good all the same, is what should or ought to be—but it is not what *we* have to concern ourselves about, it has nothing to do with duty, it is not the basis of ethics. We may admire it, we may joyfully recognize it, we may have a blissful sense through it that in our essential aim we have co-operators and allies in the world, but it does not give us our task; it does not affect us with that peculiar solemnity which comes from a sense of something to be done which can only be done by ourselves. The ideal, that is specifically ethical is related to the will—appeals to it, challenges it, lays upon it a burden; and ethics proper

* See p. 99.

deals with the direction, the aims and the rules of a good will.

The subject matter of ethics is then what should be, or the good, so far as the universe does not realize it and it is left to ourselves to realize (and I am now sketching the general idea of an ethics that would apply to rational beings other than human, if there are any, as truly as to ourselves). Is there then no distinction between Ethics and the other ideal Disciplines—Logic, Æsthetics, Politics and Political Economy—mention of which has been made? Conventionally and historically there is a distinction, but rationally speaking—that is, if we try to apply our reason in the matter and to go back to first principles—I can not see that any fundamental line of distinction exists. Logic as a treatment of right thinking holds up an ideal to the mind which is by no means necessarily realized apart from our will; if we do not purpose to think clearly and to reason correctly we may not do so. In a word, logic proposes a rule or set of rules for our conduct (as thinking beings); it might be called the ethics of the intellect. I do not see why we are not essentially as truly under obligation to think logically as to be temperate or chaste. Æsthetics, as far as it suggests to us any beauty that nature herself does not make and man

might make, is not disseverable from ethics. That peculiar quality or possibility which we call beauty has in it its own reason for being. It, we may say, intrinsically deserves to be. And though the beautifying of our persons, our houses or of objects in nature may not be our first duty, yet could we conceive all other obligations having been met, an obligation of this æsthetic order would arise—so that it would be felt to as ill comport with the nature and calling of a human being to go about as a sloven, or to tolerate ugliness in his surroundings as it is now to lie or to cheat. Politics, in any noble sense, politics as it should be, is plainly a branch or practical application of ethics. For such politics sets before us the good or welfare of a community (widely or narrowly as the case may be), a good or welfare that is conditioned upon our activity for its accomplishment; and the difference between ethics and politics is that politics deals only with so much good as is to be sought by methods of law—i. e., in the ultimate resource, by the use of physical force—while ethics considers good without this restriction. True politics is the ethics of that force-power called the State. Political economy, so far as it goes beyond the field of sociology and statistics and teaches what men should do in the

pursuit of wealth, evidently occupies the field of ethics and is subject to ethical principle. A true political economy would be dominated by ethical ideas both as to the ends it proposes and the means by which they are to be attained; it would be at bottom (whatever else it might and should add) the ethics of industrial action. If material well-being is desirable (i. e., a part of ideal good) and does not come of itself, it is right and is a duty to seek it; the economic life of a people is a part of its ethical life, and it may be beautiful or sordid according as the higher ethical principles are or are not associated with it—though the most sordid economic life is nobler than a state of sloth and inactivity.*

Ethics then is co-extensive with all that should be, whether the material or the spiritual life of man be taken into account, or even including the life of nature—so far, that is, as what should be depends upon us for its realization. There is an implication in all that I have said, however, which must now be distinctly stated. The im-

*The recognition of the ethical elements in Political Economy is one of the distinctive marks of the newer school of German economists, to which Cohn, Wagner, Knies and Schmoller belong. See Cohn's *Grundlegung der Nationalökonomie* (Stuttgart, 1885), pp. 69-78 and 356-394; also an article entitled, "Wagner on the Present State of Political Economy," in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Oct., 1886.

plication is that the good depending upon us for its realization *can* be realized, that it is within the reach of our powers. A something that should be, that intrinsically deserved to be, and that was beyond our reach, would be the ideal, the good all the same, but not the ideal that is ethical. We are not bound to accomplish what we can not accomplish. An attempt is sometimes made to derive the fact of man's power or freedom from the obligation he is under. Because we ought to do a thing, it is inferred that we can do it. And no one can fail to be impressed and deeply stirred by the Kantian dictum, "*Du kannst, denn du sollst.*" Moreover, we may admit that what we really ought to do, we can do. But the question is whether we can determine what we really ought to do without taking into account the extent of our powers. Suppose that a better order of nature, a better universe, were possible (as some have been bold enough to think); if this were so, such a better order ought to be, yet as we have not had a hand in making nature and are powerless to change the weight of a single element or to affect the most insignificant law, we could hardly be under an obligation to make the better order real—this, though the order of *human society*, as being in a measure our creation and under our control, we may be bound to change and

improve to an indefinable extent. Or suppose that there were great suffering among the inhabitants of one of the heavenly bodies; if there were literally no way of relieving that suffering, we should not have any duty, strictly speaking, toward it—and no more toward suffering in any absolutely inaccessible region on the earth. This is perfectly consistent with the assertion that unmerited distress *ought not to be* either on this planet or on any other, and that it is our duty, *if there is any possible way of affecting it*, to remedy or prevent it. So if there are any irreclaimably wicked persons (in this world or another) we should be under no obligation to make efforts in their behalf—though we are not, perhaps, at liberty to suppose that any such persons exist. Again, it is sometimes held that while we may make others happy we cannot make them virtuous, virtue being a direction of their own will and incommunicable: if this were true (I do not say it is) there would be no obligation for us to seek to make others moral or virtuous and we should be content with seeking to make them happy. Indeed, it is commonly recognized that we need do nothing at all for others, if we are ourselves sick or otherwise incapacitated—at least, that obligation does not go beyond giving them no unnecessary trouble. And even self-control we do not ex-

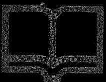
pect of persons who are so ill that all power over themselves is for the time gone.

It is obvious then that while it is true that what we ought to do we can do, this is only because in estimating the "ought" we have taken account of the "can." In this relation "what we ought to do" receives its definition as "what ought to be so far as it is in our power of attainment." Of course, there are practical dangers in such an admission, for by having great demands made upon us we sometimes get the power to meet them, and it may be practically impossible to estimate (i. e., to assign any fixed limits to) human powers in advance; yet whatever practical and pedagogic value the Kantian dictum may have I can not see that it has philosophical value*—since if there is really any limit to human power, obligation can not go beyond it. In other words, "*Du kannst, denn du sollst*" is not an instance of real inference; and "what ought to be" and "what can or may be" can be identified only on a basis of faith. Ethics here touches on the borders of another Discipline (whatever name we give it)—that, namely, which determines the conditions of the possible. Ethics is generically distinct from all

*"Believe that you can do the task and you can do it"—this is inspiring in the same way as the Kantian formula is; but no one would press it to philosophical uses (i. e., take it as exact truth).

the positive (experimental) sciences, but it is determined in part, i. e., its scope is fixed, by that science or discipline which fixes or ascertains the conditions of the possible (i. e., metaphysics or theology). And beside these three, viz., What is, What should or ought to be, and What may or might be, what other categories of the mind are there of the same generality?

It ought to go without saying that when we speak of what should be as the subject matter of ethics (under the limitations already stated) we mean what really should be. For colloquially we say that many things should be, when we only mean that they are necessary to certain ends which we or others happen to have at heart. For example, if I wish to go to a certain town I may be properly told I ought to take a certain road (which is the shortest and best road); but there is no obligation for me to take the road irrespective of such a matter-of-fact intention. If I wish to damage a certain person's reputation, it may be said that I ought to proceed in a certain way. If I wish to rob my neighbor's house, I ought to have such and such tools. If I mean to work all night, I ought to take a strong cup of tea at supper. Such uses of the word "ought" are perfectly legitimate; and yet none of them implies or is imagined to imply obligation, pure and simple.



They all mean obligation, *if* I have such and such ends in view; but not obligation. It may be that in the real sense of the word "ought," I ought not to do one of the things I have just imagined myself saying or conceding that I ought to do. In other words, ethics deals with what I *ought to do*, not with what I *ought to do, supposing I wish to realize certain ends.* If the latter were its character, and I ceased to care for those ends, obligation would cease, and the subject matter of ethics would absolutely pass away.

Here is the defect of all ethical systems which find their basis in some matter-of-fact instinct or desire of the mind. They assume to account for obligation by saying that it covers those things which we must do if we wish to live, or wish to be happy or to make others happy. And most of us, of course, do wish to live; but if by chance we cease to wish to (and not a few of the race have had this experience) the rules that were so binding upon us become entirely obsolete, the practical problem being now to learn the best possible methods (all things considered) for putting an end to life. The rules thus arising would have for us the same dignity and authority that the opposite rules once had—if obligation only means what we must do to attain any ends on which we happen

to be intent. So with the wish to be happy, psychologically more necessary to us, perhaps, than the wish to live; it may be that we cannot get rid of this wish (so long as we live)— yet if happiness is in and of itself the end, any number of rules, and of contradictory rules, may become obligatory for various persons. Selfish courses of conduct may become obligatory for one person, unselfish courses for another, according as the egoistic or altruistic instincts predominate; even brutal oppression and life-long self-indulgence may become a duty.* The wish to make others happy is a comparatively fragile part of our psychological constitution; so that to make obligation dependent upon it is to say that there is only accidentally such a thing as obligation.

It is tolerably plain, then, that if ethics deals with any solid subject matter at all, there must be an obligation independent of our matter-of-fact wishes and purposes. If there is anything that should be, it must be because it is a rational ideal (or part of one or step towards one) quite independently of whether it is the object of any one's wish, or a means to the accomplishment of that wish, or no. If there

*Compare the unflinching logic of Mr. Hugh O. Pentecost in an article on "Selfishness" in *The Twentieth Century*, April 2, 1891.

is anything that should be, it should be all the same though one does not wish it or wishes contrary to it. And in saying this I am simply defining the idea of real obligation, without saying whether there is anything to correspond to the idea or not; I am marking out the province of ethics, without deciding whether any concrete body of doctrine can be found which will fill it out. We know what a straight line is, whether such a thing can exist in nature or not; so we can have a clear idea of the essential meaning of saying that a thing should be, and may leave it to future investigation to find out what definitely the thing is (or even whether there is any such thing.) We can only say now, if there is anything that should be, it should be quite irrespective of the wishes of the person or persons concerned.

CHAPTER II

THE RATIONAL BASIS OF THE IDEA OF DUTY

Before taking up the question, What (specifically) is it that should be, I wish to dwell on the objective nature of ethical judgments, at which I have already hinted. To say, I wish to do a thing, and again, I ought to do a thing, are generically distinct propositions. A dozen wishes do not, *ipso facto*, make one ought. The wishes even of a universe or of God do not *as wishes* make duty for me (save in the subordinate sense in which I should try, other things being equal, not to make others unhappy). Wishes are simply wishes, subjective, that is, and can not of themselves give rise to any objective proposition. Another element in our nature must act to make an objective affirmation possible. This is reason or intelligence.

Wishes or cravings report how we are; it is reason or intelligence that reports the truth of things. What should be (if there is any validity in the judgment at all), is an assertion of

intelligence, though it be of intelligence in quite a different exercise from that the fruit of which is science (as I at first explained). I mean that when, in speaking of an object, we say what it should be, we pronounce a judgment, which, if it be true at all, is as valid, as much pertains to the object and lays hold of its real essence, as the most accurate scientific description of what it is. It is not what we should like the object to be, but what it should be—a genuinely objective judgment; it is not ourselves imposing ourselves upon the object and fashioning it as we may happen to fancy, it is discovering what really belongs to the object, what it would be or do were it fully itself. The object is as it is irrespective of our wishes—and sometimes most stubbornly so; what the object should be—why may not this be equally irrespective of our wishes? At least may we not familiarize ourselves with such a conception? Can we not accustom ourselves to looking upon our fellow-men, upon ourselves, as made up of two parts, the actual and the ideal, neither of which we create though both we discover?—the ideal, indeed, being perhaps the more normal part of the two.

I recognize the difficulty of the conception; and I suppose that with most of us it seems easier to recognize the man as he actually is

on the one side, and to put the ideal in ourselves contemplating him. But if it is merely in us and has no real relation to him, how have we a right to impose it upon him, and say he ought to do so and so? Others will lodge the ideal in the Divine mind instead of ours; and since the Creator is differently related to his work from the way in which we are related to one another, this is a far less violent way of conceiving of the matter. According to such a view, what we call the ideal for a man would be the Divine design respecting him, the purpose for which he was created and toward which he may be moving or from which he may be departing (being at any rate more or less different from his actual present self). I will not deny that this may be the only satisfactory way of conceiving how what is ideal to us and to the person concerned may yet be a real part of his nature—real, that is, in the sense of really belonging to him and not being fancifully imposed upon him.

And yet we must distinguish between such a way of making the fact picturable or intelligible to our minds and the fact itself. The fact—namely, of a should or ought to be, irrespective of our actual conduct or desires—may be indisputable. But a difference of opinion is possible as to the way in which it shall be con-



ceived. We may even be tolerably sure that the fact is only intelligible on the basis of the theistic theory I have just mentioned and yet be less sure of this than of the fact itself. In other words, we do not derive obligation from a Divine mind in such a sense that if we were uncertain about the existence of a Divine mind we should be compelled to doubt the reality of obligation; but we start with obligation as an immediate fact, and the hypothesis of a Divine mind is one way (perhaps the only way) of making the fact intelligible to us. In a similar way it is difficult to conceive how obligation may apply to a person when he is unconscious of it; and we may help ourselves out by picturing the obligation as being a conscious part of the mind of his Creator. But the essential fact has to be admitted (if we recognize ethical obligation at all), even if we do not credit the theistic hypothesis. For if obligation arises in view of certain objective conditions (as already explained), the simple fact that one is not aware of it no more affects its reality than ignorance of what is at the centre of the earth affects the nature of what is really discoverable there. We discover obligation and do not create it by thinking of it, any more than we do the sensible world.

In other words, obligation must be distin-

guished from the sense of obligation. Obligation arises from the nature of anything that should be; it but expresses its relation to any being who can perceive it and turn it into reality. The *sense or feeling* of obligation, on the other hand, is more or less of an accident in one's psychological development; it may be strong or it may be feeble; it may come early or it may come late, or it may, perchance, not come at all.* To take an instance, let us suppose that temperance in eating and drinking is what should be in the case of a human being. A person may be conceived who does not know that this is the ideal, who has no sense of it and no shame in violating it; all the same, the conditions of life being what they are, we should say that temperance was the ideal for him, that obligation essentially inhered in it, that he ought to become aware of it and acquire the sense of obligation towards it, and we should only be sorry for him that he never had.

One thing is, of course, necessary that obligation may apply to a person, namely that he should be able to feel it, that the obstacles to his doing so should lie in his circumstances or education, not in his nature. This is but saying that obligation being a fact that has no

* Ethics proper has thus only indirectly anything to do with pyschological or sociological theories of the origin of the "moral sense" or conscience.

meaning save in relation to intelligence, applies only to rational beings and not to stocks and stones. But granted a being essentially rational, the mere fact that he has not happened to have his mind turned in the direction of ideal good does not interfere with the authoritative relation of that good to him—and such authoritative relation is the essence of obligation. It may be that an obligation that is not felt is something difficult for us to distinctly conceive, and perhaps our only help is in regarding it as the demand of a Divine mind, but the fact is separable from the theory and has to be admitted, if Ethics is conceded to have any solid subject-matter at all.

In still another way the rational origin of our ethical judgments may be brought home to us. *All* our wishes or desires (whatever their character) are directed to essential ideal objects; since what we have already we do not wish for. How are then wished-for objects in general different from those with which Ethics deals? According to some, there is no line of demarcation; what should be is simply what we wish to have be. Ethics becomes thus purely subjective, and apart from our matter-of-fact desires would have no existence. But most persons would say that Ethics deals with what is desirable—rather than with what is simply

desired, and the question is, how is a judgment as to what is desirable possible? There is plainly a line of distinction between the two things. It is an instance of the way in which subtle and searching thinkers may occasionally lapse from habits of accuracy, that John Stuart Mill in his *Utilitarianism* ignores the distinction and gravely argues that happiness is desirable for the simple reason that people desire it, just as objects are proved to be visible because people see them or sounds audible because people hear them.* It is indeed thus proved that happiness can be desired; but every one knows that in pronouncing an object to be desirable, we mean more than this. We really mean, do we not?—and let every reader answer for himself—that the object is worthy of being desired, that even if we should not actually desire it, it would none the less deserve to be desired.†

Now how can we go beyond the bare fact that a thing is desired or can be desired and say that it is worthy of being desired? Evidently only by a process of judgment, by an

*Chap. 4.

† The fact that "desirable" and "visible" and "audible" have similar verbal terminations is apparently what misleads. But no one imagines for a moment that "audible sounds" means sounds that are worth hearing or "visible objects" objects that one ought to see.

act of reason. Desirable is, indeed, practically synonymous with rational. To say that an object is desirable and that it is rationally to be desired is the same thing. If then Ethics deals with the desirable rather than the desired, it is just by means of reason that it acquires its distinctive character. In truth, by simply adding the predicate "desirable" to that of "desired" (in speaking of any object) we pass, however dimly we may be aware of it, from one region of the mind to another, from the realm of matter-of-fact to that of speculation, from the domain of Psychology to that of Ethics. What is desirable may be the same as what is desired, so far as its content or subject-matter goes; we may be rationally convinced that what most men actually desire (i. e., their happiness) is the desirable thing—or if we conclude that perfection or self-realization is the truly desirable thing there may yet be those who rise to the point of actually desiring it; it is in form, not necessarily in content, that the two judgments differ. Reason's office may be not in originating anything, but in simply deciding which one of the many things that are or may be desired is worthy to be desired. Its whole function may be to thus affix a certain stamp or give a certain form to material which comes to it from elsewhere.*

* So living objects in nature are distinguished from non-

However this may be, it is what reason pronounces desirable (and which for most of us imperfect human beings is more or less different from what is actually desired) that Ethics has to do with. In the earlier portion of this discussion "desirable" was occasionally used a synonym for the "ideal" or the "good" or "what ought to be or should be;" these are all to my mind equivalent expressions; and I trust it is now clear how this is so. All are in intention objective conceptions or judgments. All spring from the rational part of our nature, and herein lies the distinction between the fancifully and the truly ideal. Ethics in its distinctive character has entirely a rational basis; and if any conception is inadequate or false or any judgment mistaken (as many may be) the error is to be corrected not by falling back on our matter-of-fact desires or instincts but by the use of more and more searching reason, by more thorough exploration of the ideal field and more careful determination (by speculative methods) of what the true ideal is.

I am aware that all speculative efforts of the

living objects, not because they are anywise different so far as their constituent elements are concerned, but because these elements are combined or arranged in a certain manner, i.e., because of a certain form given to them. It is form, too, and form alone that marks a work of art; the materials of a daub and of a beautiful picture may be exactly the same.

mind are attended with more or less risk and uncertainty. Very different are they from efforts to analyze the data of our experience, however difficult such analysis may be. The only thing to remember is that we have to speculate, if we are to have a rule for our conduct at all, that in one sense life itself rests on speculation, since it is always directed to ends not yet realized—so that the practical question is hardly whether we shall speculate or no, but whether we shall speculate wisely, comprehensively, consistently and well.

CHAPTER III

THE REALIZATION OF THE NATURE OF EACH BEING AS THE END TO BE STRIVEN FOR

The results of the preceding chapters may be briefly summed up as follows: Ethics deals with what should or ought to be so far as it depends upon us for its realization and so far as we can realize it, (by "we" meaning rational beings in general); it is thus marked off from all science in the positive or experimental sense of the term, i. e., from all those disciplines that investigate the actual (whether past, present or to come), from the physical sciences, from biology, from sociology, from psychology, from history, and from politics and political economy (so far as they are investigations of history and fact); if it is to be called a science (in the sense of an accurate and systematic body of thought) it is yet a speculative science; on the other hand it is not fundamentally distinct from æsthetics, from logic or from politics and political economy (considered as speculative stu-

dies), but whatever should be, in whatever realm, is really its subject-matter, so far, that is, as it is possible for us to realize it and as it is not already realized or on the way to be realized by other hands; at the same time this "should be" is what really should be and not simply what should be *if* something else happens to be desired; in other words, it is an objective judgment and is true whether the person to whom it applies has a sense of its truth or not; and as such, it is mediated by reason and the result of a process of speculation.

The question must now be taken up, *What* should be? For all that has been done thus far has been to sketch the general idea of Ethics; it yet remains to be seen whether anything can be found to correspond to the idea. A person might concede that Ethics deals with what should be in contradistinction to what is, and yet question whether it is possible to make an excursion into the speculative field and actually determine what should be. So one might allow that there is a possible psychology of the inhabitants of the farthest star and might go so far as to give to it a special name; and yet question whether the name and the idea could ever stand for anything actual.

How can we speculate at all? it may be asked. How can we leave the ground under our feet?

How can we gain so much as a notion of what is not matter-of-fact, unless it be a delusive notion? And even if we think we can leave the *terra firma* of experience, what possible guidance is there for us in the airy regions of speculation? What warrant can we have as to the truth of any ideas we may form there?

It is a simple and sufficient answer to the first set of questions to say, that human beings do speculate, that whether we can tell how it is possible or not, they are thinking almost every day of their lives beyond the boundaries of their experience, sometimes forming notions of what should be that are most sharply antithetical to what actually happens; and the psychologist has no great difficulty in explaining how this is done. As to the second set of questions it is not so easy to give an immediate answer. It must be confessed that guidance is only to be found in our own minds,—i. e., in the ideal laws of the mind. We must see to it that we are accurate, scrupulous and thorough in our thinking and that our thoughts do not, either directly or when traced to their consequences, contradict one another; and certainly if we should simply get rid of confused and self-contradictory thinking in this department, something would be gained. Yet this, one must admit, is formal rather than real guidance; and it

cannot be denied that different notions of what should be may be possible, each notion consistent with itself and internally complete, so that as between them it would be beyond our power to decide which was true. If there were a revelation from an Absolute Mind, in which the world and the whole system of things originated, this would certainly settle the matter; but such a revelation does not seem to be forthcoming, the revelations that we are supposed to have quite failing or rather not pretending to cover this point.* We have only then to do the best we can within the range of actual possibilities —that is, to develop the various views that may be held, to see whether they cover the ground and are internally consistent. It is barely possible, of course, that only one view can be worked out into systematic completeness, or, at least, that some one view might be elaborated which would practically include all the others (i. e., all of positive import in them); in this case, such a view would have all the marks of truth we could ask for. In this general spirit I submit the following view, and I am perhaps as anxious as any one to find out whether it can be developed and stated in an intelligible and consistent manner.

* There are many ethical commands in the Jewish and Christian "revelations," but there is no attempt at a reasoned doctrine of the ultimate good.

It is plain, in the first place, that we have to conceive what should be conformably to the nature of each particular thing or being. By what should be, I do not mean an abstraction, but what this, that or the other thing or being should be; and it is conceivable that while a plant should be one thing, an animal should be another and a human being quite another. My view in essence is as follows: What should be is the realization of the nature of each particular thing or being. It is true that I may thus seem to fall back upon what is matter-of-fact; and in one sense I do—but not in a sense inconsistent with what I have before said. For I do not mean that a being should be what it is, that it should seek what it does seek (in which case Ethics would be a superfluity), but that a being should seek the realization of all its capacities, and thus, perhaps, become something quite different from what it is. The nature of some beings does not realize itself spontaneously (where this does take place Ethics has no application); it may happen that some beings never manifest their capacities or even find them out; in a word, such self-realization is a truly ideal end.

The objection occurs at once that if the realization of one's nature is what should be and one's nature is bad, then the realization of what

is bad becomes what should be. By bad in this case is probably meant what is injurious—injurious to another or to one's self. But it must be remembered that if what should be is the realization of the nature not of one being, but of each being, if the general aim and law of conduct is derivable therefrom, then action by one which hinders or renders impossibile the realization of the nature of another is wrong—and quite as truly action which results in a similar harm to one's self. We are thus compelled to define more closely what we have in mind in speaking of the nature of a being: we mean those possibilities the realization of which does not involve injury to itself or harm to other beings.

But it may be asked, Are not we human beings continually injuring and destroying not only one another (which may be indefensible) but animal and vegetable existence as well? We may, of course, be doing so and yet not have the right to; the question really is, Have we a right to? If what should be is unqualifiedly as I have stated it, if it is the realization of the nature of each particular thing without limitation, then we have a right to realize our own nature only in so far as we do not thereby interfere with the realization of the nature of anything else. According to such a view men and

animals must live, so far as they can live, without doing harm to one another. Even vegetable existence would have to be included in this treaty of peace. The result of the practical adoption of such a view (in the world in which we human beings now live) would probably be, that few or no human beings would continue to exist; yes, that few or no animals (if they could act on the view) would survive, since they derive their sustenance in great measure by destroying vegetable life. It is true that such a tracing of consequences does not dispose of the ethics of the question. It might be better that there should be no animal or human life than that it should maintain itself by violating ethical requirements—a position similar to that which bold spirits have taken, in affirming that in case social order among men is only possible (as some have thought) on a basis of poverty and misery among the many, it would be better that social order should perish.*

The ethics of the question can only be settled by disinterestedly asking ourselves, Do all forms of life stand on an equal plane? Is the animal's existence as much to be respected as human existence and is vegetable life equally sacred with animal life? It is not enough to

* Compare the language of Channing, *Works* (A. U. A. edition), p. 32.

say we want to live and are bound to live (at whatever cost)—the question is, how far is such an instinct and determination morally legitimate? The animal, if it had a voice, might say the same; and in that case there would result simply a brutal trial of strength, as brutal on the man's part as the beast's. It is evident that an answer to the question can only be had by going back to the fundamental inquiry, What is it that gives worth to anything? Now the only answer I can give to this deeper inquiry is that the worth of a thing depends upon the extent of its being, upon the range of its possibilities. According as a thing has a wider or narrower range of possibilities, it ranks higher or lower in the scale of being. This gives an objective meaning to worth; it is not fixed by what we happen to like or fancy or admire, but depends upon an actually larger or narrower range of possibilities. The atom, for example (if the conception of popular science is true), is a thing of absolutely limited capacities; it may enter into combination with other atoms and become an unconscious part of a larger whole, but in itself it is simply what it is and always has been and always will be. Thus destitute of potentiality it ranks far below the least living seed, which may become in time a form of beauty, with leaf and blossom. So any plant

or tree, if (as is commonly supposed) it has no sensations, does not stand as high in the scale of being as the lowest form of animal life that knows what pleasure is. In the same way, if the animal creation, however it may shade off into the human species, is yet broadly distinguished from it, by having a narrower range of wants and ideals, more limited possibilities of intelligence, perhaps no properly moral life, and by being in general less educable (i. e., less capable of progress), then the tribe of animals ranks lower in the scale than man. Hence if only a certain amount of life is possible on this planet we cannot be in doubt as to which type ought to be sacrificed as possessing the lesser worth—and this as a purely objective and disinterested judgment, quite apart from our own instincts and cravings in the matter.

The Buddhist religion says, indeed, that we should not take animal life; and it is interesting to note that this religion, i. e., its ethics, rests entirely on a hedonistic basis—it treats happiness or pleasure as the end of life. The two things are closely connected. For in respect to capacities for pleasure simply, animals and humankind are substantially on the same plane: pleasure is pleasure whoever feels it—and if the supreme duty is to add to the sum

of pleasure and to avoid the infliction of pain in the world, then it is as wrong to injure and destroy animal life as human life. It is not in the capacity of pleasure, but in the capacities of reason and conscience and self-government that humankind is different from the animal world. At the same time the rightfulness of taking animal life is conditioned upon its necessity; the wanton destruction of such life, i. e., for mere pleasure or sport, is condemned by the principle under discussion; and the ideal order would seem to be one in which each thing or being could realize its own nature and live out its own life unhindered by other things or beings about it—an order anticipated by a prophet of Israel when he said, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."* It is the accidents of our earthly situation that prevent this ideal from being realizable and that make legitimate for us what under other circumstances would be wrong. To sum up: What should or ought to be in the case of any particular thing or being is the realization of its particular nature or possibilities; but particular things or beings have different grades of worth

*Isaiah, XI. 6.

or dignity; and if it so happens that all can not equally live and grow (i. e., if we are compelled to choose and select which shall live and which shall perish), it is right that the lower beings should be sacrificed for the higher.

I am aware that the question arises, Would not the same logic justify the destruction of inferior races of the human species by other races more advanced? Evidently all depends upon whether the different members of the human family have a common nature, i.e., whether they are properly speaking one family. If the ordinary conception is correct, namely that they are, then is the stamping out of an inferior race by a superior one iniquitous. Nor is this hitherto prevalent conception (prevalent at least among Christian peoples) so easily undermined as some would appear to think. For it does not mean that races are actually alike, that they do not stand on different levels of culture, that they do not vary in moral and intellectual as well as in physical attainments, that some tribes do not seem to be actually much nearer the animal kingdom than to the company of civilized peoples; it simply means that the potentialities of all are essentially the same, that all are called by their inherent nature to substantially the same great ends. Yet, on the other hand, if it could be shown

that any race or tribe is incapable of advance, that, for example, it is not only actually destitute of morality, art and science, but is unsusceptible to their influence and cannot acquire them, then though such a race might be called human, and though its members might have the human form and smooth skins and stand upright like the rest of us, it would not have the claims upon our respect which human beings proper have, and might, if the world were not large enough for them and ourselves, be sacrificed; in a word, they would be practically animals to us, or perhaps, a connecting link between animals and men—at any rate, not sharers of the same nature with ourselves. The question would be one of fact, and it might be most difficult in a special case to determine what the fact was; at least it would be perilous to decide that a given race was not human.

And if we deal with the matter practically, i. e., as it relates to the conduct in the present or past of civilized peoples toward most so-called inferior races, it is indisputable that these races were or are human and that the conduct of civilized peoples toward them has been ethically criminal. Our own treatment of the Indians is a glaring instance. The progess of civilization, the evolution of ever higher and higher types of society are a part of what should be,

for they mean the progressive realization of the nature of man; but they dare not be bought, and cannot really be attained, by a violation of the fundamental law that all who have a common nature should be alike reverenced. Anglo-Saxon civilization, so far as it has not observed this law, is itself tainted, unwholesome, one-sided and destined to be superseded, as many indeed are beginning to suspect.

Let us now return to test a little more closely the idea of the nature or possibilities of a being. Is it not after all, it may be asked, too vague to serve for the purposes of scientific discussion? Are there not possibilities of all sorts as a part of our nature, possibilities of ignorance as well as of knowledge, of failure as well as of achievment, of going wrong as well as of going right, of unhappiness as well as of happiness? Such an objection, however, fails to take into account what I really mean by "possibilities;" and this it is now necessary to more precisely set forth. By possibilities I do not mean whatever we might be or do, but the positive capacities or capabilities of our nature. It is hardly proper to speak of ourselves as having a capacity for ignorance; what we have a capacity for is knowledge; ignorance is simply what happens when this capacity is not brought into play. Would it not be absurd to speak of the capac-

ity of a bird for not flying? Its capacity is for flying, though it is, of course, possible that it should not fly. So there is no capacity for failure: it is a misuse of language to speak in this way. In other words, capacities (or such possibilities as I have in mind in speaking of the nature of a thing) are positive: they are the germs or seeds of some attainment, the promise and potency of something; while all ignorance and failure and defect simply signify that something has not been attained; they partake so far of the nature of nothing.

But, it may be said, is not pain a positive thing? Is not wrong-doing as much as right-doing, sin as much as virtue an appreciable something? I will not argue for the notion, as is sometimes done (though with other motives) that pain and sin are negative rather than positive in their nature. I think as much might be said for the idea that pleasure is simply the absence of pain, though I do not hold that this is true either. I admit that pain is a positive reality, a something that can not be described by negative terms. Hence if what should be is the realization of our capacities simply, it would seem as if pain ought to be desired equally with pleasure, a conclusion which is monstrous. The temptation is great at this point to say that what should be is simply

pleasure and the realization of other capacities of our nature so far as they are instruments of pleasure. I offer, however, the following considerations.

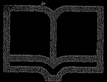
The realization of the capacities of our nature is what I have proposed as the good or desirable (speaking now of human beings). If then there is anything which hinders such a realization, it would be so far an evil; it should be deemed and treated as undesirable. Now pain is a something which is admitted to be (as a rule) not only subjectively unwelcome and repellent, but objectively, and quite apart from our feelings in the matter, devitalizing, harmful; sometimes it is even destructive—for it is said that beings may die of pain. Now to whatever extent it does thus tend to lower our vital power (our power of thought and affection and volition included,) to put a check on the development of our natures, why may we not say, it is what should not be —not simply because we do not like it, but because of these its effects? On the other hand so far as pain does not have this effect, so far as it is a means to, or an incident in, the accomplishment of what is actually desirable (as in some cases we can see that it is), may we not reckon it as a part of what should be? I am not sure whether this really meets the diffi-

culty or not; but it seems to me that it does. The fuller definition of what should be would accordingly be as follows: The realization of the capacities of our nature so far as they are consistent with one another and can go to make up a whole. I am not sure that this qualification is not implied in the very idea of the realization of the capacities of our nature; and it is in any case parallel with the definition already given of what should be as between different beings, which was the realization of the nature of each so far as it is compatible with a similar realization for the rest.

What rational account, then, can be given of pain? How happens the capacity for it to belong to our nature—a capacity that must to some extent be thwarted that our nature as a whole may realize itself? But may not one ask whether the capacity for pain is really a capacity for itself? Is it not rather the obverse side of the capacity for pleasure? That is, in the capacity for pleasure, must there not always be the possibility of pain?—fully admitting that pain is not the mere absence of pleasure. Pleasure results from certain acts (acts on the whole that tend to the preservation of life); but if we do not perform these acts, or do contrariwise, we may have pain. It is better on the whole to have some pain than to be with-

out the capacity for pleasure; and pain may be our teacher, is so in some obvious ways. Hence whether we regard it as an incident in the life of beings who have the capacity for pleasure or as a means of warning, we may see that pain has a place in the economy of our nature, without regarding it as a part of what unqualifiedly should be and without regarding our liability to it as a positive capacity of our nature as is our capacity for pleasure, for knowledge or for æsthetic judgment and appreciation.

As to sin or immoral action—that, too, is a positive thing. Yet would it not be straining language to say that we have a distinct capacity for immoral action? We may act immorally, but it is in virtue of the same capacity by which we do what is right and good. To speak briefly, we have the power to act in accordance with what we rationally pronounce good or desirable; but in this power to act in one way (in a way that ennobles us) is of necessity contained the power to act in another way (a way that debases us); yet when we act in opposition to what reason pronounces good, we sin. It is on the whole better that we should sin than that we should not have the power of moral action at all; but the power of moral action is plainly the positive capacity in us and sin is but the misuse and perversion of that



power. Without at all regarding sin, then, in a merely negative light, we are not obliged to say (and, strictly speaking, the language has no meaning) that we have a capacity for sin. We are liable to sin, we have a capacity for goodness.* In view of these considerations, I do not feel obliged to abandon the view I have proposed.

A question of practical moment does however arise in this connection. Speaking now of ourselves (i. e., of human beings as distinct from other existence) do our capacities all stand on the same level with one another, or is there a gradation of rank among them? We have said that human beings were of more worth than animal and vegetable types of existence because of the greater range of their possibilities. Is there any distinction of worth among these possibilities themselves? Is the capacity for pleasure on the same plane as that for knowledge and rational thinking? Are there grades in the rank of pleasures themselves—does the enjoyment of eating and drinking stand on a par with that of appreciating a work of art or thinking rational thoughts? If not, why not? On what principle do we distin-

*John Henry Newman says, "Evil has no substance of its own, but is only the defect, excess, perversion or corruption of that which has substance." (*Idea of a University*, p. 60.)

guish? Granted that the harmonious realization of all the capacities of our nature is the ideal and that it would be possible in an ideal order of things; suppose it is not possible now, to which capacities should we give the preference? And even if it were possible, would higher or lower be words without meaning in relation to them? I think a distinction does arise in the following way:

We have the various capacities referred to. But they do not of their own accord develop themselves harmoniously—this one and that one are apt to get a disproportionate or exclusive development. How then shall the harmonious development be secured? Evidently by being thought of and striven for. The idea (of an harmonious development) must precede the result. Now the capacity for such an idea we call reason. The rational part of us comes then to have a peculiar and pre-eminent importance, because it furnishes the principle of order for the due development of our nature as a whole. The sense of beauty is akin to it, since it is fundamentally a kind of appreciation of order or harmony; and the sense of beauty is properly ranked higher than any merely physical sensibility or appetite. The will has also a peculiar dignity; the will as distinct from all mere instinct and appetite is the power of ac-

tion according to ideas; it is by the will that the idea of the total realization of our nature is practically carried into effect. This is not saying that any instinct, appetite or craving, any part of our nature whatsoever, is in itself unworthy, that every one should not be realized and would not be in an ideal constitution of things; but only that some capacities are higher than others, are to be preferred to others, if a choice has to be made—"higher" meaning that which comes nearer to being a first principle in our nature; "lower" that which, instead of regulating, has to be regulated. Reason (including the æsthetic sense) and the will are first principles in our nature; our other capacities, being in and of themselves blind, require to be ruled by them (by the mind ideally, by the will effectually).

The notion, then, that what should or ought to be is the realization of the nature of each thing or being (in the sense already explained) appears to stand the test of criticism. Duty, in the broadest and most fundamental sense, comes to mean aiming at and striving for the realization of the nature of each thing or being throughout the world (so far as we can anywise aid in the accomplishment of such a result); in other words, it is co-operation with the ideal ends of the universe in general, so far

as those ends do not realize themselves and as it is in our power to assist in their realization. Towards mere being, or towards what simply is and cannot be otherwise (atoms, for example, or space or time), we have no duties; towards processes that accomplish themselves we have no duty; but towards processes that are in the direction of an end that may or may not be accomplished, duty does exist provided we have power to help. If, for example, we could help a tree to a fuller realization of its capacities, we should do so; provided, of course, other and prior duties leave us time and that such realization would leave the tree a part of an harmonious totality of nature. So of any sentient being, a horse or a dog; we have only a right to hinder the development of animal existence or to destroy animal life if the higher interests of humanity are to be positively served thereby. Of course, the fact is that the nature of these lower orders of being for the most part realizes itself, or at least that the realization is accomplished by other hands than ours.

It is in the field of human life particularly that duty finds a point and full meaning. Not only do we know our own nature better than that of animals or trees (being able to take an inside view of it), but here we

can have an influence that we can not have outside ourselves, and here most depends upon our influence. In this field the formulation of duty becomes, Labor for the realization of the capacities of the race in general and of the individual men and women with whom you are in contact; labor also for the ever fuller and fuller realization of your own nature. As matter of fact, part of the reason why the ends of human existence are so imperfectly realized, is that so little attention is turned that way. We are led by our instincts; we think simply of what we want and not of what should be, and hardly rise into the atmosphere of rationality. When we care for others, we care for them one-sidedly—for their comfort or happiness; and most of our thought is given to ourselves and our surface-selves at that. Hence the appropriateness and necessity of ethical thinking and activity, if what should be is taken seriously at all. If we were beings whose ends were realized apart from any will of our own, if we had to take no thought for our minds or for the direction of our wills (as it has been sometimes supposed we need take no thought for our bodies), if all went on and went right by a beautiful necessity of nature, duty would cease to have meaning for us; as it is, however, it has all the meaning of choosing what should

be as the regulative idea of one's life, of co-operation with nature, of obedience to what, if we are theists, we must call Divine ends.

What the capacities of our nature are in detail I have not sought to specify; much less have I attempted to classify them. This would be an interesting subject of inquiry; but I have said enough to indicate what it is I have in mind—and I am much more interested in adding that I do not think we can state fully what human capacities are in advance. For the formula I have given does not refer merely to such capacities as we now commonly attribute to human nature, but to such as may show themselves in the future evolution of the race as well. The ethical aim has this aspect of indeterminateness or infinity about it. It is not merely directed to this or that good that we know, but to all good—and to this or that, in so far as it has the characteristic marks that belong to all. What the complete man would be, we may not be able to say beforehand; what a perfect society of human beings would be, it may be impossible to picture to ourselves. We can only say that the complete man would be all that his present or any future capacities would make it possible for him to be; and that an ideal society would be a glorified relationship and communion of such intelligences.

And yet it is not difficult to say what would be a completer man than any, or at least most of those, we now see; it is not difficult to picture to ourselves a more perfect society than any which has been thus far produced. The capacities of human nature ordinarily accredited to it are rarely developed in any fullness or harmony in even select specimens of the race; and there are whole masses of men in whom they can hardly be said to be developed at all.

The scope, the possible compass of our duty, we may not be able to define. But present duty is easily within the reach of our apprehension—it is to fill out what vision of greater completeness we already have, to round out our own humanity and to labor for the humanization of all—of those particularly, I might say, who have been almost denied their birthright in the past and are only beginning to recognize that they have the rights and claims as well as the duties of men. To respect our own nature as human beings and to give equal respect to that of others, in other words, to strive for the realization of the capacities of human nature wherever it is found, to labor for the fulfillment of the ideal destiny of every man—such is to my mind the gist of ethics so far as its human application is concerned. At the same time it should be remembered that wherever there are

ideal ends outside the field of humanity the attainment of which we can further, the same basis for duty exists. Human beings are, perhaps, the only *subjects* of duty. The lower orders of being do not appear to be capable of forming a rational idea of what should be, and so obligation does not apply to them. There are no duties, strictly speaking, for trees and animals. But *objects* of duty they may be, and the wide world may be conceived to be, if it is moving on to some end or consummation which we can help or hinder. In one sense indeed we ourselves are the only complete objects of our duty; for it is ourselves only, our own natures that are really in our power. This applies equally to the dealings of human beings with one another. Each one can dedicate himself to the realization of his own capacities (personal morality), but he cannot in the same sense dedicate himself to the realization of the capacities of others; we can only incite others, assist them, take away obstacles from before them—but they themselves must take the steps. This, however, is not denying that we have a duty to others, but only defining it. The definition of what should be remains what it was; and the definition of duty, to labor for the realization of what should be, so far as it is in our power to contribute to that realization, remains

also. In subsequent chapters we shall compare this view of what should be with other views sometimes advanced.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER THEORIES OF DUTY—INTUITIONISM

I wish in these concluding chapters to briefly consider other theories of duty than the one I have proposed.

Perfection may be regarded as the end to be striven for. But what is to be understood by perfection? Does it mean anything else than the full realization of a being's capacities? Do we attach any other significance to the idea? If not, this view resolves itself into the view I have already advocated.

Again it may be held that life is what should be coveted. Does this mean length of days, duration of existence? But who will hold that many days with little in them is preferable to fewer days full of thought and activity? If simple duration of existence is the most desirable thing, then the lot of the "eternal hills" is better than that of living, feeling beings which come and go, and the supposably immortal atoms are nearer to ideal good than thinking,

aspiring and yet mortal man. Or are we to understand by life the sum-total of all our powers considered as in a state of activity and development? If so, and if our spiritual nature is taken into account along with the physical, this view is resolvable into the one which I have proposed—the only difference being that I have attempted to state what life and the fullness of life really mean.

Something similar might be said of progress, sometimes proposed as that most worthy to be desired. If this means the progressive realization of the capacities of man (and other beings), it practically coincides with the conception which I have advanced. For progress is more than movement; it is movement toward a goal, and the conception is incomplete without some notion of the goal. Practically progress is consistent either with the view I have opposed or with other definitions of what is ultimately desirable. In other words, progress of itself is an incomplete idea; it requires supplementing.

Another view of what should be is that a certain state (or states) of the will should be; states to which we may collectively give the name virtue. By this is meant obedience to certain rules; it is held that such obedience is a good in itself irrespective of any further ends to which it may contribute, and that the rules

are immediately seen to be binding and require no justification. To such a view we may give the name of Intuitionism, though I will not vouch for the correctness of the appellation and I do not wish to be understood as undertaking to criticise the special views of any who may call themselves Intuitionists.*

The critical question is, whether rules of virtue are really the objects of an immediate judgment or whether they look beyond themselves and require ulterior justification. Instances of such rules are veracity, chastity, courage, prudence, love, justice. It is not to be denied, that what we may call moral common-sense—understanding by this the average unreflective judgment of most persons in civilized communities—regards these as self-evi-

* In one sense, it may be said that all complete ethical theories are intuitional; that is, all affirm or presuppose some end that is immediately seen to be desirable. Those who deny that any action is good in itself and say that everything must be judged by its tendency to contribute to man's welfare or happiness do yet implicitly assert that that welfare or happiness is an end to be sought, and since everything else is to be judged by it, that it is itself to be judged by nothing; that is, there is no standard beyond it, which is the same as saying that it is immediately seen or judged to be the true standard. Utilitarianism, then, (if, as is pretty well agreed, this is the name for the happiness-theory of Ethics) is intuitional in its foundations. So is the view that duration of existence is the finally desirable thing; so also the view which I have set forth. It must in the nature of the case be impossible to infer or deduce any really first principle in ethics from another principle, for, in this case, it would

dent duties, duties, that is, which require no justification.

And yet when we are led to reflect upon and analyze these duties, we may think differently. It is possible to question whether we are bound at all times, in all circumstances, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. No one, I suppose, will hold that we may not in certain situations mislead a wild beast; may we not also mislead a robber or, at any rate, a murderer—and even if not by word, then by a look, or a gesture, or by silence? Is not truth, in other words, subject to the law of benefit, is it not generally so obligatory because it is so necessary to mutual benefit? In those rare cases where it would work harm rather than good, may we not depart from truth? And can we not conceive of circumstances where truth-

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not be a first principle; in other words, a really first principle must be the object of an immediate judgment or perception. Intuitionism, in this sense, has nothing to do with the theory of innate ideas, or with supernaturalism; and, if it had. it would be as possible to hold that we have an innate idea that man's happiness is what should be as to hold that we have an innate idea that virtue is that supreme end or that the realization of man's nature is. Supernaturalism, too, is as capable of combination with utilitarianism or with sheer egoism (as it was actually in the case of Paley) as with the most contrasted views. Strictly speaking, then, ethical systems are not to be classed as intuitional and anti-intuitional—for all are at bottom based on a direct perception or judgment—but according to *what* is supposed to be the object of the direct perception of judgment, viz.; happiness, virtue, life, progress, or what not.

telling would be almost a crime? Similarly is not chastity a means to an end, rather than an end in itself? Is not the true end the maintenance and guardianship of the family-relation, which itself, indeed, is a means to the further end of the continuation of the race under the most favorable conditions? Courage, too, looks beyond itself; it is for an end —the gaining or conferring some benefit. Fear is better than courage in face of dangers that we cannot cope with—for thereby our lives or the lives of others may be saved, when otherwise they might be sacrificed. Prudence comes very near being a virtue in itself; a wise regard for our own ends is certainly unconditionally and always a good as against simple indifference to them or miscalculation of the means to be taken to attain them; and yet, when the ends of others are taken into account, it may sometimes be a duty to let concern for ourselves go.

In the same way love to others is unconditionally and always a duty, i. e., as against hatred or contempt toward them, or the disposition to merely use them for one's own purposes; and yet those who, in the exercise of love to others, should cease to care for themselves at all, might be said to not only fail to do what was best in the long run for others,

but to show a kind of injustice toward themselves. For whatever fundamental reason exists for loving others, exists also for loving ourselves, we being of the same nature as others; hence unselfishness may practically require sometimes to be corrected and balanced by self-love; it is possible even to conceive of circumstances in which others should be sacrificed rather than one's self. Just when the self should be preferred and when others, is a question of detail, a problem of casuistry, that I need not deal with now.

If there is any duty that would seem to be self-evident, it is justice. We may go against prudence (I mean, of course, rightfully go against it); so we may go against love; but we may never go against justice. There are no conceivable ends for which we may disregard it. It transcends the distinction between the love of self and the love of others, and exacts that we love others *as* we love ourselves. In accordance with it, too, we must love others equally—and not out of regard for one sacrifice others, as unregulated altruism is so apt to do. We may speak of justice as a means to an end, namely, an actually just order of things; but such an order can only be defined as what would be if the rule were obeyed. It must also be allowed that it may be no easy thing to determine what justice actually requires in some of the complex

situations of life; justice may often be a problem—but the problem is not like the problem of casuistry to which I have just referred, since it is not a question of how far we shall follow justice and how far some other principle (parallel thus to the question of how far in a given case we shall follow self-love and how far the love of others); the problem is rather what does the one principle (namely justice) actually demand, how in given circumstances shall we come nearest to contributing to the one end of the common realization by all men, present and to come, of the capacities of their natures. Yes, justice in seeking the good of men would seem to be a self-evident duty, and thus the claim of Intuitionism would seem to be valid as regards at least one point.

And yet a question arises. I have spoken of "justice in seeking the good of men." But is not this qualification, "in seeking the good of men," necessary? Is justice, in and of itself, of self-evident obligation? Justice in and of itself would seem to signify nothing more than impartiality, treating one person as we do another. But suppose that we treat all men alike ill, or that we are equally indifferent to all? We cannot then be taxed with injustice, but we can hardly be said to be exemplifying a duty. Suppose we give to every child of our acquaint-

ance a stick of candy or distribute to every grown-up person we meet a bit of gossip, we certainly cannot be called partial or unjust, yet we may do harm rather than good. The question is then, does not justice (as an idea in and of itself) require to be supplemented by some notion of what we are to aim at or justly seek, if it is to serve as an ethical rule? Justice in conferring a benefit is good; justice in doing injury is bad. Moreover we may justly seek any of the ends already considered; either life or perfection or progress or happiness or the realization of their natures we may seek alike for all. In other words, we cannot know whether we are doing well or ill in doing justice, we can not even know what justice practically means, until we decide *what* it is that we shall justly seek. But this is equivalent to saying that justice in and of itself is not a self-evident duty or a duty at all.

If justice is taken in the sense of giving to every one his dues, a similar conclusion seems to be not the less unavoidable. For the question cannot fail to arise, What are the dues or rightful claims of men? One might hold that it would be defrauding at least his friends not to give them the last choice morsel of gossip that had come to his knowledge, or that candy was the rightful due at least of his own children. And,

to speak seriously, what in the last resort is it that is man's due? Is it happiness, or is it his legal rights, or long life, or the realization of his nature, or what is it? The mere notion of justice does not furnish so much as a clue to the right answer to these questions. In other words, it is necessary to look beyond justice, to discover what practical meaning we are to attach to it. And I think it will be found that wherever justice does make its peculiarly powerful appeal to our minds, it is conjoined with some notion of a good to be sought, or of a claim to be met, however vague the notion may be.

Hence, Intuitionism (in the sense here used) breaks down. No virtue or rule of virtue is complete in itself; none can even be defined or scientifically stated without reference to something beyond it—so "self-evident" a virtue as justice implying (to the extent it is self-evident) some worthy end to be sought alike for all, or some valid claim to be conceded.*

The only way in which Intuitionism can save itself would be by taking virtue in a deeper and broader sense, namely, as that fundamental act or choice, by which we aim at what reason pronounces desirable—all the "virtues" being re-

*Compare a saying quoted from Chrysippus in *Plutarch's Morals*, (Vol. IV., p. 443, Goodwin's ed): "Neither any of the virtues is eligible nor any of the vices to be avoided for itself, but all these things are to be referred to the promised scope."

garded as outgrowths, or exemplifications, of this act or choice. But in this case Intuitionism would be indistinguishable from other ethical theories already considered, and from that one to which we shall now turn our attention —Utilitarianism.

CHAPTER V

UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is based upon the view (to borrow John Stuart Mill's language) that "happiness is desirable and the only thing desirable as an end."* By happiness is meant not merely the happiness of the person acting or choosing, but the happiness of all men. The theory could, indeed, be extended as easily as the view I have advocated, to cover the lower orders of creation, so far as sentient beings are among them, though we could not, of course, according to its terms, be said to have duties toward trees or plants. I do not think it necessary to consider at the present time that view which is some-

*If the term, Utilitarianism, were taken literally and apart from its historical connotations, I should have no difficulty in accepting it as a partial designation of the view I hold. I entirely subscribe to Plato's language, (*Republic*, Book V., 457B), "that is and ever will be the best of sayings that the useful is the noble and the hurtful is the base;" but the question remains, useful to what end? Plato's statement is consistent with a variety of ends. But the characteristic doctrine of Utilitarianism, in the historical sense of the term, is that pleasure or happiness is the end.

times confounded with Utilitarianism — the view that one's own happiness is the ultimate end; this view is Egoistic Hedonism, while Utilitarianism is Universalistic Hedonism.* From a rational standpoint it seems to me that if happiness is the thing that is desirable, the happiness of another is as desirable as my own; or if I start with my own happiness and am yet willing to think or reason at all, I can easily see that another's happiness is a good for the same reason that my own is. One may hold that one's own happiness *is* desirable and that ideally it is on a par as a worthy object of regard with the happiness of others; but this view is consistent with Utilitarianism—while Egoistic Hedonism seems a something unnatural since it says, so far as it is a distinct theory at all, that one's own happiness is the only thing supremely worth regarding.†

As to the contention that happiness is desirable, I see no reason whatever to dispute it. That a being who can experience pleasure is more richly endowed than one who cannot and that the realization of this capacity is a good,

* I borrow this terminology from that mine of scrupulous thinking and careful statement, Sidgwick's *The Method of Ethics*.

† A similar distinction is conceivable with reference to any other concrete end, like that of the realization of man's nature, or that of perfection, of progress or of virtue; I mean that each might be taken egoistically or universalistically.

no one can question. The matter of debate is whether it is the *only* thing desirable as an end. For this is the Utilitarian affirmation—that happiness alone is what unconditionally should be and that every other activity or attainment is only valuable as it contributes to happiness. But why should happiness be alone desirable? It is the realization of one part, one positive capacity, of our nature; but why should not the realization of other parts, of our capacity for knowledge, of our capacity for moral action, of our capacity for æsthetic appreciation or achievement, be also desirable? It is true that we may care more for happiness than for science, for right action, or for art—but the question now is, what *should* we care for? and my contention is, not that happiness is unworthy or that it should be treated as of no account, but that it is simply one among other desirable ends. No one will deny that knowledge is in idea distinct from happiness—one may have knowledge without happiness, as one may have happiness without knowledge; so is the appreciation or creation of the beautiful; so is moral conduct. It is even possible to conceive of beings who should know, who should have æsthetic perceptions and judgments, and who should act, yet all without enjoyment—not as being unhappy, but as being without capacity for pleasure or pain. Such beings would not, it

appears to me, rank so high in the scale of being as those that we actually know with their keen and manifold susceptibilities to pleasurable sensation; and yet they would rank higher than mere unconscious existence, and the realization of their nature would be a good. Would any one say of such beings that it was indifferent whether they attained knowledge or not, whether they developed their perceptions of the beautiful or not, whether they acted rightly (i. e., rationally) or not, simply because they experienced no pleasure in doing so and conferred no pleasure on one another? It seems to me that this would be to give to pleasure a place that we have no warrant in reason for giving it; which is equivalent to saying that the fundamental position of Utilitarianism is, in a measure, arbitrary or wilful. For it must be remembered that the characteristic feature of Utilitarianism is the assertion that happiness is the only thing ultimately desirable, knowledge and art and right conduct being desirable only in so far as they contribute to happiness, that is, result in pleasurable sensation.

The Utilitarian might, indeed, ask, In case knowledge contributed to unhappiness rather than happiness, in case the perception of the beautiful made us miserable, and action of whatever sort involved us in more pain than pleasure,

should we still say that knowledge and the exercise of our other faculties were good? My answer would be threefold: In the first place, the supposition is a very extreme one and would appear to be possible only on the basis of a pessimistic view of the universe. To match it for extravagance one would have to ask on the other side, Suppose that happiness were only possible by deceiving ourselves and living in a realm of cloudland and superstition, by habituating ourselves to and coming to love what is ugly and vile, by living an idle and purposeless existence, though we had the capacity for great achievement, would such happiness be worth having? But, accepting the supposition, extreme as it is, I should remark, in the second place, that under such circumstances the development of our capacities might still be a good (in itself), though not a good in relation to happiness; and the question would thence arise, would existence on these terms be desirable, what was good under one aspect being bad under another? Even if existence (on such terms) were pronounced desirable, it might not be supportable, sentient beings not being able to stand more than a certain amount of pain; and what on account of our matter-of-fact constitution we can not endure, we are under no obligation to try to endure; that is, the de-

sirable in this case would not be the ethically desirable, i.e., a basis for duty. And this leads me to say, in the third place, that the desirable itself, according to the view here advanced, is the realization not of any one capacity, (or set of capacities) but of all the capacities of our nature, and thus presupposes the possibility of a certain totality of development, i. e., of a realization of any one capacity that is consistent with the realization of the rest. If this can not be (at least approximately), if in the nature of the case one part of our nature can only be developed by leaving other parts undeveloped or injuring or destroying them, then the theory I have advanced of the desirable does, indeed, break down; but it need not on that account be misunderstood; and it does not carry with it the duty of living a life of unmixed pain, or of developing our intellectual or aesthetic or practical capacities to a point inconsistent with some degree of happiness. It only means that intellectual and other development is not to be estimated *merely* by its tendency to make us (or others) happy, that knowledge is good as a realization of one of our capacities and art is good as the realization of another, just as happiness is itself a good (irrespective of its relation to anything else); not, however, that any of these

goods is a total good or the only good, so that it and it alone is worthy to be desired.

Utilitarianism contains thus an element of arbitrariness or irrationality. But more than this it is questionable whether its standard is a sufficient one, i. e., whether happiness is in itself capable of determining duty in any completeness. It does seem to be implied in the Utilitarian view that the happiness of all men alike shall be sought, i. e., that justice shall be practiced. For if happiness is the end, then wherever a being capable of happiness appears, such an one should be regarded; and equal treatment of all is the essential meaning of justice.* So love would be called for; also veracity and chastity and courage, since it can hardly be doubted that these are conducive to happiness, happiness being taken in the universal sense. The development of intelligence makes possible a greater amount of happiness and hence becomes a good—so also the culture of the æsthetic nature. To a certain extent, then, happiness does determine duty. But there are two ways in which its insufficiency as a standard becomes tolerably evident.

* If justice is taken in the other sense, above mentioned, of giving to different beings their respective dues, such justice would be none the less called for by the Utilitarian rule. Its practical meaning would be, Give to each one the happiness he is capable of.

In the first place, happiness being the end, the happiness of every one must be sought, and, since animals are capable of happiness, the happiness of animals as well. How then do we distinguish between what we owe to animals and what we owe to men? Do they stand on the same level and must we join the Buddhists in treating animal life as equally sacred with human life? It may be said that human beings are capable of more happiness, and therefore their happiness should be preferred; but justice would seem to dictate that each being should have that happiness which it is capable of—and if it can have less, that its rights should, if anything, be more sacredly respected. If it is said, however, that human beings are capable of higher kinds of happiness, the question arises whether it is possible for us to form the notion of higher and lower kinds, without resorting to some principle beyond happiness? One kind of happiness is as truly happiness as another; the difference is not in the pleasurable sensation, *per se*, but in what is associated with it or, more strictly speaking, in the sources from which it springs. Intellectual pleasures are, indeed, different from the pleasures attending the gratification of the senses, but they are different not in respect to their specific quality as pleasures, but in their origin and in the rank

assigned them by the mind. Yet if we have to go outside of happiness, to determine what are higher and lower kinds of happiness, the Utilitarian theory is plainly incomplete. It may, of course, be held that it *is* as wrong to take animal life as it is to take human life; but not only does the average moral consciousness refuse to allow this, but, as we have before seen, there is rational ground for a contrary opinion.

Secondly, in the circle of human beings themselves, we are presented with a similar difficulty. For if the supreme duty is to make all men happy, we must make them happy in the way in which they wish to be happy—since naught else is happiness to them. To make a man happy in ways he does not care for, comes near to being self-contradictory. The variableness of happiness for different individuals is well known. Nor need this in itself occasion perplexity. We may say that men *should* be made happy in as many ways as they wish to be, provided these ways are innocent and not dishonorable. But it can not be denied that some men find happiness in ways that are debasing or unworthy. Ways that preclude the possibility of future happiness would, indeed, be condemned by the Utilitarian standard itself (for Utilitarianism signifies seeking the greatest pos-

sible amount of happiness). But supposing that a person could be happy till the end of his life in ignorance or superstition, in the selfish pursuit of wealth or the ostentatious use of it, in the indulgence of some vicious or criminal instinct, there would seem to be not only no obligation to interfere with such happiness, but a positive obligation to further it to the extent of our power. Unfortunately, society presents us too many instances of those who find their happiness in living mean, self-indulgent or, at best, idle lives. So far as this does not cut short their days, should we not co-operate with them, while at the same time we bestow equal regard on those whose tastes and desires are, as we are in the habit of saying, of a more "elevated" sort—making each class happy in its own chosen way? So far as justice is concerned, would not this impartial regard for the varying tastes and desires of all become its practical meaning, and would not love (aiming only at happiness) act only more zealously, though, perhaps not always with the same impartiality, in the same way? To love a person and yet deny him his wishes is felt to be almost self-contradictory. Soberly speaking, however, it is impossible to allow that it is our duty to make people happy irrespective of whether such happiness is of a worthy or unworthy sort.

It may, indeed, be said that since Utilitarianism enjoins furthering the happiness of all, we have in this requirement of a happiness for each consistent with the happiness of the rest a limitation upon the kind of happiness we are to further. And this would prevent our furthering the happiness of those who find happiness in conduct that makes others unhappy; but all other happiness would still have its claims upon us, however ignoble—happiness in superstition, happiness in obeying stupid prejudices, happiness in conceit and vanity, happiness in depraved tastes, in idleness, and even in vice and meanness, so far as these do not make others unhappy (however disregardful of their rights). In brief, it is not a duty to further every body's happiness irrespective of what the character of that happiness is; and yet Utilitarianism gives us an imperfect criterion of what constitutes a worthy sort of happiness.

It is true that if all those whose happiness we are to seek, obeyed in turn the Utilitarian rule themselves, our difficulties would be lessened, if not wholly obviated; but the rule counsels us to seek the happiness of the actually existing men about us, not of ideal beings—and it would be almost absurd (or, at least, it would be a totally new rule) to say that the rule is to regard only those who obey the rule.

On the other hand, if the realization of the total capacities of our nature is the end (in the case of others as truly as in that of ourselves), then that happiness is worthy which is consistent with such a realization, and superstition, prejudice, conceit and vanity, as being inconsistent with knowledge and a due intellectual development, depraved tastes as inconsistent with the cultivation of the aesthetic nature, idleness as incongruous with the development of our active powers, not to speak of any vice or meanness, would all be marked as unworthy; in other words the end which I have proposed supplies a criterion which the Utilitarian end does not.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The outcome of the preceding chapter is that Utilitarianism is incomplete as truly as Intuitionism was previously shown to be, though in a different way. Both require supplementing by recourse to other principles than those which characteristically belong to them. That is, each fails as a self-consistent theory in itself.

And yet each contains elements of truth; and not the least merit of the theory advanced in chapter III is that it is able to, and does expressly, include these elements.

Happiness is an end of our being. I mean it is an ultimate end. We do not have to say why happiness is desirable or why the desire for it is right; it is desirable in itself—it is something that contains within itself its reason for being. The capacity for pleasurable emotion raises us in the scale of being above all insentient existence. When we attain to unmixed pleasure, we have (to use metaphysical

language) reached one of the ends for which God made us, though this we might also say of any joyously-singing bird or bounding animal. We do not have to ask what is the use of pleasure; the glory or the sweetness of the moment is enough. Of course, this is said of pleasure in itself, of pleasure as pleasure—not of pleasure when vitiated by coming from an unworthy source. This is the truth of Utilitarianism—it is right to aim at happiness, the happiness of ourselves as truly as the happiness of others (within the limits already described); it is wrong to be indifferent to happiness, to be morose and sullen, as Dante well knew, who assigned a fitting punishment to those who chose to be gloomy where they should enjoy.* The error of Utilitarianism is not in making much, but in making everything of this truth, in ignoring other capacities of our nature which rank as high if not higher, and are no more means to an end than is the capacity for happiness.

I wish now to point out the truth in Intuitionism. I have shown that virtue can not be defined save by going beyond itself (or any rule of virtue); virtue is a state of the will, but it is the will directed (either immediately or by implication) to certain concrete ends. And yet from another point of view, this very direc-

* *Inferno*, Canto vii.

tion of the will is itself a good. For the possibility of such a direction of the will is one of the positive capacities of our nature; quite apart from any contribution to happiness which it may make, a virtuous will has intrinsic worth. We may perhaps see this clearly, if we picture to ourselves on the one hand a company of beings made perfectly happy without any will or exertions of their own (whether in their own or in one another's behalf) and, on the other hand, beings who make themselves happy, who make one another happy, whose active powers are well-developed and whose wills are strong for mutual good. Surely in dignity of being the latter company rise higher than the former—though the happiness of both were exactly equal; indeed, should we not say that it was better to have incomplete happiness along with a strong direction of the will towards good, than to have perfect happiness without this? In other words, virtue is a good irrespective of anything it leads to, irrespective of its uses. We cannot rationally ask, what it is for (though we may ask, what does it aim at or how is it to be defined)? any more than we can ask what pleasure is for. It contains within itself its reason for being, simply as the realization of one of the capacities of our being—and of one of the crowning capacities (as being so closely related to reason, which

may be called the regal principle, as before explained).

Utilitarianism exalts a state of feeling into the place of what is ultimately desirable; Intuitionism gives the same place to a state of will. Intuitionism is, practically speaking, to this extent nearer right; but both are wrong in that they take account only of parts of our nature, the realization of whose total capacities is alone absolutely good. Our rational and æsthetic capacities are to be taken into account along with our capacities for pleasure and for virtue. Art is good not for any utilitarian reason merely, nor merely for any (in the narrow sense) ethical reason, i. e., because it may help to virtue; it is good simply as the creation of the beautiful, good because it satisfies and springs from certain independent capacities of our nature. So is science good, so is philosophy—not for any uses beyond themselves, not even to enable us to live better lives—but because science and philosophy are the product of a pre-eminently noble part of our being.* Even ethics itself may be studied philosophically, I mean not for practical guidance and help, but with the aim of bringing into order and system our often incoherent notions of the good and so satisfying

*Van Buren Denslow finely vindicates the independent character and worth of intellectual curiosity, as of the love of beauty, in his *Modern Thinkers*, pp. 250, 251.

the purely rational instincts and cravings within us. To Aristotle, contemplation, theoretic vision, was the supreme good;† and whether it is so or not, it is surely a part and an independent part of the total good—and science for itself has as much claim to be, as art of itself, or "virtue" for itself, or happiness for itself, although in truth all have the right to be simply as parts of the total achievement of the spirit of man, as the consummation of the total Divine end of his being. And true virtue, virtue not in the conventional but in the ideal sense—that the account of which is ethics proper—is not any single and special finite act or habit, but the voluntary dedication of ourselves to the total idea of our being, or, to use theistic language, the willing co-operation of man with God. Hence science, art, "virtue" (in the limited sense), happiness are parts of the ethical ideal; they are all things that should be; they alike give a basis for duty.

It is only an ethical theory of such a scope that I find satisfactory; that is, that seems anywise complete, self-sufficient, self-consistent. What name I shall give it I do not know. I am not even well enough acquainted with the history of ethical speculation to know what particular writers, if any, have sanctioned it in

† See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X, chap. vii.

the past. It has points of contact with the view advanced by the late T. H. Green in his *Prolegomena to Ethics*, though I had developed all its main features before reading that book. I have learned much from Aristotle, from Butler, from Kant, from Sidgwick, but I cannot say that any of them taught me just the theory I have advanced or gave me help in meeting its peculiar difficulties, as I have tried to face them in chapter III. Yet it is after all a view which finds frequent popular expression in these days—for who has not heard that it is our duty to develop harmoniously all our faculties? It might be said that all I have done is to attempt to state this truism scientifically.

Though I have stated the theory abstractly, it is one which, if practically accepted and followed to its consequences, would produce many changes in the world—changes which the spirit of the time is already beginning to make. That all men should develop the capacities of their nature is really a revolutionary proposition. Utilitarianism has been a practically reforming force; the view I advocate would go in the same direction, only further, since it asks for men not only that they may be made happy, but that all the higher capacities of their nature may be unfolded as well. It is not comfort alone, it is a perfected humanity that is to be made pos-

sible. The demand is that wherever a man is, there the ends of man shall be accomplished—whether he be in factory or mine or shop or field and even if his outward semblance almost belies the claim that he is a man. But this is not the place for practical deductions from the theory; I will not even say that it is the true theory; I can only say that it is true to me, (with the best exercise of rationality that I have been able to command); whether it is true to others who have taken the trouble to follow the windings of my thought, they must themselves decide.

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(QUOTED OR REFERRED TO)